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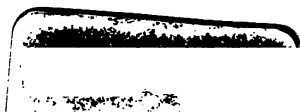
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BAPTIZED WITH A CURSE.

VOL. I.



BAPTIZED WITH A CURSE.

A Novel.

BY

EDITH STEWART DREWRY.

'And a magic voice and verse
Hath baptized thee with a curse.'—*Manfred*.

IN THREE VOLUMES.—VOL. I.



LONDON :

TINSLEY BROTHERS, 18, CATHERINE ST., STRAND.

1870.

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PROLOGUE.

I HAVE only a few words to say about this strange Manuscript, which came into my hands one winter's night.

It was given me by one who had received it from the writer ; and what he has of necessity left blank, another hand has filled in. Let it suffice that I knew the writer and those of whom he speaks.



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BAPTIZED WITH A CURSE.



MANUSCRIPT I.

‘Sinking down through infinite depths of the darkness.’
LONGFELLOW.

Is that the murmur and hum of the vast city below? Are there many in that seething multitude like me, or is there one whose memory recalls my face and name? No, better not; oh, better not, lest they couple the memory with a curse! Does the same moon shine on them that is looking in on me grimly, mocking me


with its ghastly brightness? Can it be true what they say? Is there any hell, save that in my own soul, any tortures greater than remorse? They tell me there is a God, all-just, all-merciful, all-powerful; but if so omnipotent, why did He let sin enter the world? Yet when I ask them that, they answer, 'It is a mystery to be believed by faith.' Why do I shudder at their answer? is it like the echo of other years? does it seem as if I heard again the low plaintive voice of that foreign child? Do I remember the past? do I *not*? is there an hour, a word, a look, a face that I do not see and remember as if it was yesterday? do I not live over again every moment of my life, back, back to my childhood? I was inno-

cent then, O God! I was innocent then!

Do I recall the sunlit nursery where I played as a child, but oftener, far oftener knelt by the window, looking drearily out through the bars into the crowded street, and wondering, in a sad vague way, what it would be like to have brothers and sisters of my own age, and a fair, gentle-spoken, golden-haired mother, such as I never knew, who might have taught me to be good?

Do I recall that when I heard any of my child-playmates talk, it might be of having been to church last Sunday, or of having said the Lord's Prayer to their mother? I laughed scoffingly, and asked them 'what was that?' and felt a strange pride and pleasure at their wonder and

shrinking from me. Was I not a type of the secret that makes at least half the scoffers and infidels? Yet it was no pretence to ask them 'what was that?' how should I know, who never heard it? My mother sneered at what men called religion; and instead of it, spoke to me and let me read of strange beliefs and theories of the German school, at once sceptical and visionary. I took it in too well, and yet I can remember that through it all there would sometimes struggle upwards, like a flower choked by weeds, a vague yearning for something more pure and simple; something that in after years often checked the sneer on my very lips, and made me shrink in terror. What if it should be? what if, after all, that



foreign child was right? Shall I ever get the memory of her face away? Am I going mad? Is the mind I have misused gone before me to the powers of darkness? I dare not believe. She would be there to accuse me, with that face, with that voice, 'That is the man!'

Oh for one touch of what I never knew! Oh for one grain of faith!

MANUSCRIPT II.

THE STRANGE RIDER.

Do I remember the earlier years as distinctly as those nearer? Yes, every detail but too minutely. Shall I go back to the very day *she* came, a child to my mother's house? I was past early boyhood then, being sixteen. Can I do it? well, well, no matter; it must be.

It was a fine afternoon in autumn, so fine, that I soon forsook the house and wandered out. Though restless and com-

panionless, I found myself straying back in an hour, or it might be less.

The sun was lower, but it still threw its light along the river, which wound along below, passing the gardens of our house; while the high road leading to the little town skirted the summit of a rise, commanding a very fine view, of which our old-fashioned Grange formed the foreground. I turned off the road, and lay behind some furze bushes, whose height sheltered me from the dust. Perhaps I fell asleep, or sunk into a dreamy reverie, I don't know which; but I was roused by the sound of voices on the road behind me, one of which was strange, the other I knew for that of the village clerk, a man who had seen better days and was

superior to his present position, but withal, the most inveterate gossip in the parish.

I turned gently, and resting on my arm, remained so, able to hear and see too through the bushes. The old clerk, Mr, or more generally Dick, Ferguson, was standing with his back towards me, leaning on his huge silver-topped stick, his left hand resting on his hip, his left foot flung a little before the other, and his lengthening shadow falling quaintly across the road till it reached the stretch of common on the other side. The other speaker was evidently a stranger, and was mounted on a noble chestnut horse, which he sat with the graceful ease and command of a finished horseman. As far as I could judge,

he might have been somewhere about four-and-twenty : his figure was very fine, tall, slight, and lithe ; and the hand that held the reins was not white, because he was a dark man, but beautifully made, small, nervous, chiselled as by a sculptor's chisel—the hand of a man of birth. Of his face I could see little, for he wore one of those graceful broad-brimmed felt hats, drawn low on his brow and set slightly on one side, so that it completely shadowed him, but I could see that he had a slight, silky, dark moustache and beard. Over his left shoulder, too, was thrown a long somewhat heavy cloak, which did not seem to me of English make ; and, indeed, there were two things about him which especially struck me. His voice was soft and very

musical, pleasant to hear, but there was something in his accent, in the figure of speech, in his *tout ensemble*, that was not English, though if he was foreign, I was quite uncertain what nation to assign to him. Secondly, he gave me the impression of a man ready to assume, if not already under, some disguise.

What were the first words I heard from him, then? a simple enough question, most natural to a stranger,—‘Friend, what do you call that small town along the road there?’

‘It is called Stone-Heath, sir,’ returned the little clerk, glancing curiously up at the tall rider; ‘it’s a very ancient place.’

‘It looks old. I have just come

through it. A very quaint place. How far is it to London?’

‘A long way, sir, but the rail goes from here, if you are going there.’

‘A thousand thanks. I saw it. You have a fine view from here,’ sweeping his hand out towards the river. ‘I suppose that large gable-ended house down on the banks is the Manor House?’ and he pointed to our house.

I listened more closely, sure that the little clerk would go off full tilt into our family history.

‘Lord no, sir!’ said Dick Ferguson with an indignation I thoroughly understood. ‘The Manor House is on the other side; the Dormers are the lords of the manor, a very old fami-

ly. *That*, sir, is Stone-Heath Grange.'

'Ah! then the old family have not got it, I take it?'

He was keen, then, this stranger; he had gathered that from Dick's tone, which dealt a back-handed blow at the Grange.

'You are right, sir,' he said regretfully.

'A woman, sir, did all the mischief; the women always do.'

The stranger laughed, a rich, soft, amused laugh, that I thought I should know again.

'Why, how was that, friend? the women, I salute them,'—he raised his hand, as if to lift his hat, but dropped it again, 'although they are certainly at the bottom of most mischief.'

'Well, sir, one was there. The real

old family, you see, sir, was called St Leger, but it must needs go and end in a daughter—'

'Dombey and Son was a daughter, after all?' put in the rider.

'Exactly, sir, a daughter, an heiress, Miss Catherine St Leger, and she must needs go and marry a foreigner, a refugee, handsome, certainly, and a gentleman of old family. He was a German, and they called him Dr Von Wolfgang, though why "doctor" I don't know. They left only one child, sir, a boy, the father of the present owner, and a precious wild scamp was St Leger Von Wolfgang.'

'Then he took the old name?'

'Yes, sir, oh yes, he had to; it was in the last Mr St Leger's Will.'

‘And who did this wild scamp marry?’ asked the stranger.

I felt for a moment inclined to jump up and ask him what the devil he meant by asking questions, but I saw that he was only drawing Dick on.

‘Marry, sir? why, a beauty and a peer’s widow. Do you know the name of Falconbridge?’

‘I cannot say I do.’

‘Well, no matter; only the present lord is her son, only child by her first marriage. I don’t know exactly who she was, but I have heard that her mother was a Creole lady. Any way, Mrs Von Wolfgang—’

‘She dropped her title, then?’

‘Oh yes. Well, her name is not

English nor yet French ; they tell me it's a French Creole name,—Georgine. She has one son, the present owner, who is his brother's ward.'

'Is he under age, then ?'

'Lord yes, sir ; only sixteen, a handsome clean lad like his grandfather, the doctor.'

'And what is his name ?'

'An outlandish one enough, sir,—Casper.'

'Casper Von Wolfgang.' He repeated my name slowly, as if weighing] it letter by letter. 'A thorough German name ; pretty too, and unusual. Which name do you mostly give them about here ?'

'Well, sir, of course their own class give them their full style, but the rest

popularly, as one may say (specially those who remember the old family), generally call 'em simply Wolfgang. The St Legers were liked, you see, sir.'


'And these Wolfgangs are not, eh?'

'I don't mean, sir, that they are personally disliked. Certainly Mr Casper isn't, for he's handsome and kindspoken.' ('Thank you, Dick,' muttered I.) 'But his mother is haughty, very haughty; got a temper, too.'

The stranger laughed.

'Is that why they are not favourites?'

'No, sir, no; but, you see, the St Legers were county gentry, and lived here, spent their money here, subscribed to the county hounds, took interest in everything; now, these Wolfgangs don't, and



never did. They are London people, care nought about Stone-Heath, and are seldom here, except for a little while in the autumn or spring. It isn't possible we should like them so well; and, besides, there is something queer about them,—they have never once been seen in church. For the lad I don't wonder, but Mrs Von Wolfgang—'

'Is she a Roman Catholic, or maybe a dissenter?'

'Neither, sir; she never enters church or chapel of any kind, and won't even visit the rector. I call it shocking, quite unorthodox.'

'Quite shocking!' said the stranger gravely, but my ear detected a vein of irony in his soft voice. 'The rector

should reclaim this wandering sheep.'

Dick was puzzled, I know. He could not make out this strange rider at all, still he chattered on from where he had stopped.

'And the more's the pity, sir, that only this very day she's got come to her a little niece or relation to live with her, I fancy. Poor child! such a beauty, too.'

'A beauty, eh? do you know her age and name?' asked the tall rider, laughingly.

'She seemed to me about seven or eight, sir, and her name—let's see, I heard it, a rather odd one—Miss—yes—Miss Nina Lennox—'

'Is she Scottish, then?'

'I believe not, sir; only—'

I did not wait for more. I was seized with a desire to see nearer, perhaps speak to the stranger; and crawling along behind the bushes, I rose up at a little distance, and came lounging along the high road, or rather the footpath, by the side of it, stepping as softly as I could. But the strange rider had a keen ear, and lightly as I trod the turf, he heard me, for he turned his head sharply, and immediately lifting his right hand, drew his broad hat lower, and flung his heavy cloak in unconsciously graceful folds across him. As he did so the sun flashed on a gleaming gem on his finger, and threw off so dazzling a ray, that for the moment it blinded me.


Dick Ferguson saluted me.

‘Good-morning, Mr Casper ; glad to see you. Maybe you can tell this gentleman the distance to London ?’

(‘Well done, Dick,’ thought I ; ‘I’ll step as far as the church porch to please your orthodoxy.’)

I turned, and looked up. My light cap left my face bare enough, and under the shelter of his Calabrian hat, the strange rider was studying it, printing off every line, every shade, on his own mind ; not rudely or obtrusively, but quietly, in the most natural way, as only waiting for my answer. I know not why, but I felt uneasy, fretted, determined to say something, though I answered him first.

‘It isn’t over twenty miles ; an easy ride I call it, and pretty too.’



As I spoke a restless movement of his spirited horse drew my glance to the firm hand that instantly checked it. I had not been mistaken. It was a delicately beautiful hand, perfectly made, and how nervous, how firm and strong; better to grasp in friendship than feel its grip in enmity, if I could have seen then!—

‘A thousand thanks,’ he said, with courtly grace. ‘I shall take it in preference to the rail. You have a quaint old town back there, and this lovely view. I have been looking at it.’

‘And at me, too,’ I broke in, with a boy’s brusquerie that must have betrayed my annoyance. ‘You’ll know me again.’

‘Which is more than you will me, mon

ami,' said the stranger with a soft laugh, that struck my ear with a curious dare-devil ring.

'Shan't I? No, not perhaps your face and figure in another dress or after years, but I think I shall know this anywhere,' and I touched his bridle hand—the right was under his cloak.

He laughed again, amusedly, incredulously.

'Not you, *giovannaccio mio*, it's not your trade; you would never be able to swear to my hand.'

'I shall!' I answered impetuously. 'I shall know it, and your voice and accent.'

'Not one of the three, unless I choose it; but I shall know you. Good-day,

friend,' bowing to Dick. 'Au revoir, Mr Casper St Leger Von Wolfgang—adieu.'

'Allez au diable!' I called angrily after him as he rode away, and he heard, for he turned in his saddle to kiss the chiselled hand I declared I should know, and his laugh came back to me on the wind. The next minute the strange rider disappeared over the brow of the hill.

I heard that laugh in my ears long afterwards. I hear it now.

MANUSCRIPT III.

NINA LENNOX.

I did not wait, or give Dick any time for any remarks on the stranger, for I turned directly, jumped over the bushes, and bounded away home, in a very irritated state of mind. How that man's words and tone rankled :

'Not you, *gioranaccio mio*, it's not your trade ; you would never be able to swear to my hand.'

And why not, I wonder ? it was a



very marked hand. Not my trade ! Was it his, then ? who, what was he ? a Cosmopolitan, a citizen of the world ? Whatever his nationality, English, French, and Italian seemed to have come with equal facility to his tongue ; but beyond that conjecture fell, baffled. I had crossed the path of an enigma.

In a moody humour I went into the house, and made my way towards the drawing-room. As I entered the corridor I heard my mother's voice through the open drawing-room door ; and then a child's voice, exquisitely sweet and flexible, said,


‘ This picture is like you, Aunt Georgine. Is it your son ? ’

‘ Yes ; look at it, Nina.’

I advanced on tiptoe to the door, and for the second time that day looked and listened unseon. Before my own recently finished portrait stood my mother and a child.

Looking back, I recall that picture as vividly as I saw it then, the spacious room forming a back-ground of white and crimson; the wide lofty windows admitting a broad sweep of light, glowing with the rich colouring of the red autumn sunset, while the last bright rays of the sun fell full on the half-Creole-looking woman and the golden-haired child.

Georgine Von Wolfgang (it would weary the ear to often call her 'my mother') was, in truth, somewhere about forty; but she looked as women of her type often




will, fully ten years younger. No lines yet on the smooth face, no gray visible amongst the thick brown hair, dark almost to blackness. She was handsome, and knew it. I have heard her called a superb woman, and it was exactly the word. Not that she was queenly, or much over the medium height, but she had a well-set head and fine form, and she carried them well, and she had very fine eyes and clear rich complexion, inherited from her French-Creole mother. Haughty, passionate, impetuous she certainly was, capable of tornado-like storms of passion, and unforgiving implacable hatreds, with a leaven of hardness in her, that showed in her face worldliness, scepticism, little of that which makes softness and faith. She

loved pleasure and ease, she loved herself, she loved me much, and my half-brother Walter a little. I do not think she cared for much else. That was *my mother*.

‘A superb woman, that Mrs St Leger Von Wolfgang,’ said the world.

Her hand rested on the child’s shoulder, half hidden by the masses of golden hair which fell over it in heavy waves rather than actual curls.

How shall I describe Nina Lennox? the slight, fragile form, which nothing could have robbed of its supple grace; the small noble head, so perfectly formed, so faultlessly balanced, that the eye only marked the perfect whole; the intellectual imaginative brow, and large, thoughtful, dark eyes, like the deep fathomless sea;



the finely-cut and delicately classic features, and rich glittering hair, made her a picture indeed of living beauty ; a beautiful child, and, one day, to be a most beautiful woman.

My mother spoke again.

‘ Yes, that is my son, your Cousin Casper. What do you think of him ? ’

‘ Is this portrait like him ? ’

‘ Very, my dear ; exact.’

‘ Then he is handsome, and he is very like you, too,—just like you only. Aunt, how old is Casper ? ’

‘ Sixteen.’

‘ And you ? ’

Georgine laughed.

‘ Don’t you know that it’s rude to ask a lady her age ? ’

‘Yes, I know—old ladies, but—’

‘How old am I, then?’

‘You, aunt? oh, not old at all. You don’t look older than my French bonne, who is thirty.’

‘Thanks, pretty one, for the compliment. I am eleven years older than that.’

‘Then you are forty-one. Is Casper your only child?’

‘No; I have another, who is married.’

‘What is his name?’

‘Walter Falconbridge—Lord Falconbridge.’

‘Why isn’t his name Wolfgang?’

‘Because he is my son by my first husband, my dear, and his name was Falconbridge.’

‘Oh; is he my cousin too?’

‘Walter? certainly.’

‘Then I should like to see him. What is his wife’s name?’

‘Theodora.’

‘Is it? that is mine, too. Mrs Bury said it was a Greek name, and she told me what it means.’

‘What does it mean?’ asked my mother, caressingly.

Nina looked up, a quiet reverence on her brow, and in the music of her sweet soft voice, said,

‘God’s Gift.’

The caressing hand dropped suddenly, and Georgine drew back, as if an asp had stung her. Then she broke into a derisive laugh.

‘Oh, ma foi! child, don’t talk such nonsense to me. God? bah!’

I saw that child shiver, and her large dark eyes open wide in startled wonder; but she said nothing, only moved away to the window, while Georgine threw herself on a sofa.

In a little while the child turned, with a half-weary, half-impatient sigh.

‘Aunt Georgine, the sun has set. I wish your son Casper would come in; I want to see him.’

How pretty my name sounded on her lips. I withdrew a few steps, and then walked into the room.

‘Ah, mother, so you have got your little niece in my absence,’ said I, advancing to the bow window. ‘Miss Nina

Lennox, I hope we shall be good friends,' and bowing low, I held out my hand.

She lifted her observant blue eyes, and gave me a long steadfast look, that I could hardly bear, it was so keen and searching, and suffered me to take her little soft hand, and kiss her. Mark! suffered me. She did not give the hand, or offer the kiss, but she said, 'Then you are my cousin, Casper Von Wolfgang. I am glad you have come in.'

'Thank you, pretty one. I suppose you wanted a game of romps?'

'No, I wanted to see what you were like.'

She delighted, amused, charmed me inexpressibly. I smiled, then laughed out.

'You quaint, original child; well,

what do you think of me ? ' said I, sitting down and drawing her to me.

She did not answer at once, but moved her hand from button to button of my coat, up, up to—yes, to my dainty, elegantly-fastened tie, over which I spent full fifteen minutes every morning ; and I suffered it !—ye gods, I actually let those tiny, delicate fingers touch it, softly feeling the fine silk texture.

' Well, Nina, are we to be friends or enemies ? '

Again that keen look, very wistful this time.

' I don't know ; friends, I suppose. I think I shall like you, only—'

Only what ? I would have given worlds to fathom that child's mind, to

reach her *arrière pensée*, but it was vague to herself, impossible to get from her in words, and I dropped it.

‘O Nina, look, you wicked monkey; my dainty tie!’


For the delicate restless fingers had fairly untied it.

For a moment she looked scared, and then broke into a rich gleeful laugh, full of innocent mischief.

‘Oh, I have spoiled it! let me tie it again. I’ll do it beautifully.’

‘Right, away, then!’ said I, making merry anger over it. ‘You are as mischievous as a colt, or my pointer puppy.’

‘Have you got a horse and puppies?’ said Nina, swiftly and deftly trying me again.



‘Oh yes, round by the stable-yard; puppies as big as a young donkey.’

‘Puppies are never so big,’ said she, shaking her golden hair at me. ‘There, I’ve done this beautifully; see, aunt. Casper, look in that pier-glass—’

‘Really, Nina, you are a fairy. I am enchanted. It is superb; actually as well as I do it.’

‘Better, you mean. But, now,’ said she coolly, and putting her hand in mine with a child’s fascinating assurance, ‘take me to see your horse and puppies.’

‘Why, child,’ said my mother, ‘you and Cas must be hungry. Coffee is coming.’

(We had dined early, for Georgine to go and fetch Nina from London.)

‘No, we’re not, aunt; I want to go out first, or it will be too dark. Come, Casper.’

‘Casper,’ laughed my mother, ‘you must strike your colours to this spoilt little empress.’


‘I have done so already, mother. “A wilfu’ woman” you know.’

Nina stopped on the threshold.

‘Do you know what Mrs Bury says is that proverb? “A wilfu’ woman maun hæ her way, but a wilfu’ mon’s the very de’il.”’

‘I sing small,’ said I, jumping through the window on to the terrace, and she followed me, laughing joyously.

We soon gained the gate to the stable-yard and kennels. I paused.



‘Now, Nina, ain’t you afraid? there is a large fierce mastiff to begin with—’

‘He won’t hurt me; dogs never do. He’d let me put my arm round his neck if I coax him. Open it,’ pushing impatiently at the door.

‘Tiger is loose, I tell you.’

‘I don’t care, I’ll call him. Tiger! Tiger!’

I had never known Tiger do anything but bark at a strange voice; but now, instead, there was a questioning, uneasy whine inside the door.

‘Come, then, take my hand.’

‘No; I’m not afraid. I’ll go in before you.’

‘You daren’t, little boaster.’

She flushed.

‘But I dare. Open that door.’

I did it, fully expecting her to retreat in terror to me, from the huge mastiff within, but I never was more mistaken. Stepping boldly before me, she passed in first. Tiger came up directly, growling ominously, and pawing and smelling round her in a way that might have alarmed a grown man.

Not so this pure little child.

‘You great beauty! you noble, dear old Tiger. Good boy; nice old fellow.’

There she was in a minute on her knees before him, stroking his nose, his ears, his great paws; the next moment she had his huge head on her shoulder, and her arms round his neck.

‘Casper, look! see what friends we are—Tiger and I.’

So they were. Tiger only drew his head away to lick her hands, her arms, her very face, letting her play him a hundred tricks, tying his ears, taking up his paw, even pull his tail, to my utter surprise; and when we moved on, he kept at her side, looking up in her face, and fussing round her for notice, as he had never done to any one before.

She was delighted, stopped to hug him, and gave him her hand, which he carried gently in his mouth as he walked at her side. Many a rough romp has she had with Tiger, many the time he has rolled her over, making believe to bite; but huge and rough as he was, he never so

much as bruised her, never even scratched her, or left the marks of his teeth on her flesh. She used to wander out alone, but if we knew that Tiger was with her we were never anxious; and though she petted and liked the other dogs, great rough Tiger was her first love and her last.

‘I shall call you Una,’ said I, laughing.

‘Why? who was Una?’

‘Una is the heroine of a poem which I will give you some day. She was the faerie quene, and tamed a lion.’

‘And I have tamed a tiger,’ said the child, laughing merrily. ‘Una is a pretty name. Where are your puppies?’

‘Here is one.’ I whistled, and from an inner yard—the kennel-yard—came bouncing up my favourite, Don, a hand-

some young pointer of a year old, brown from head to foot, not a white spot on him. Always over friendly with strangers, he jumped boisterously on Nina; and being large and strong, the violent onslaught made her stagger. I almost expected a cry, but instead she fairly hugged the dog with a burst of delight.

‘Oh, you dear dog! He likes me, too. Don, down, sir; you bite too hard.’ For Don had got her arm in his mouth playfully and left marks on it, and she administered a slap to his brown face, at which he pranced. I laughed, and led the way to where there was a litter of real puppies, which the groom, who had the charge of them, had just fed.

In a minute Nina was seated on the

ground, and had them all in her lap running over her, alternately playing with and teasing them, seven in all, — three water-spaniels, two pointers, and two curly, perfectly black retrievers.

‘All pups together, sir,’ said the groom, highly amused. ‘Wouldn’t missy like one o’ them little ’uns?’

‘I don’t like little dogs,’ said she, putting the retrievers on Tiger’s back and a spaniel on his head, and then she broke into peals of laughter at their futile endeavours to get down.

‘Oh, do look; how funny they look. And isn’t old Tiger good?’

‘Lord, miss,’ said Baylis, when he could speak for laughing, ‘it’s all along of you. I never thought to see Tiger letting

them pups be put on him ; but dogs is so fond o' children, and, bless her pretty face, sir, 'tain't no wonder as he takes to her. Missy, wouldn't you like to see the hosses ? '

' Oh yes, please ; -are there many ? '

The puppies were put down, and she was on her feet again.

Back again to the stable-yard, and Baylis showed her the horses.

' What big gray horses, Casper,' she said.

' Those are for the carriage, "fayre Una."'

' You *will* call me Una, then. And those pretty white ponies ? '

' They are for the phaeton.'

' And those two brown horses ? '

‘ Mine and mother’s, for riding.’

‘ But there is an empty stall.’


‘ I think, Nina, that we must fill it with a little riding horse for “fayre Una.”’

She looked up, her blue eyes dancing, her cheek flushing.

‘ Will you, *will* you really, Casper? and let me ride with you.’

‘ Yes, really; and to-morrow I’ll show you the boat-house, and take you on the river. Come in now; see, it is dark, and mother is waiting for us.’

Dear little winsome thing! when she came to bid me ‘good-night’ she laid her soft face against mine, and whispered a little tremulously, ‘I was naughty to you when I came; I do like you, I do like you very much.’



O Nina, Nina! Theodora, God's gift, indeed! If I had only known— There, hush, hush! what am I writing?

When she was gone, I asked my mother about Nina's history, for till then I had really hardly known, and cared still less for her existence, nor had my mother, and she could only give me an outline.

Georgine's only brother, Theodore Lennox, had gone to Calcutta when very young, and there married a lady, who died in giving birth to Nina. At three years old she was sent to England, but, not being very good friends with Georgine since her second marriage, Colonel Lennox sent her to a Mrs Bury, who took Indian children. He died himself two

years after, suddenly, leaving no Will, and only £2000, which were in the English funds in Mrs Bury's name, for the use of the child. Mrs Bury seemed to have been a faithful guardian, but lately her health had failed her, and she was going to Madeira, of course giving up her pupils. So she wrote to Mrs Von Wolfgang, as Nina's nearest relative and only legal guardian, and my mother at once adopted the child.

So this is how our house became the home of Nina Theodora Lennox.

MANUSCRIPT IV.

A BOAT RACE.

IF I linger over this period, I may surely be pardoned. I was young then, and happy, — and innocent then as I never was in after years.

I had not been used to care for children—generally speaking, lads of sixteen do not, though I have known many exceptions—but this child charmed, fascinated me. Her pretty ways, her vivid imagination, her intellect — I am not

misapplying the word,—more than all, something deep and fathomless about her drew me irresistibly to her, and made me her slave. I am sure any other child would have been hopelessly spoiled, for even my mother felt something of her charm, but she was not harmed.

The moment breakfast was over next morning she came round to me, coaxing in a way that nothing male could resist.

‘Won’t you take me to the river now—in the boat?’

Georgine looked up, deprecatingly.

‘My dear Casper, she’ll be afraid; take Elise.’

Elise was her French bonne, who had been with her from her birth, having been

Mrs Lennox's maid, and my mother had wisely retained her in her service.

‘Oh, Aunt Georgine, we don’t want Elise; I’m going for my hat, Casper, so get yours.’

‘Mother, she is as imperious as you,’ laughed I, as she vanished.

Georgine bent her dark arched brows.

‘Very pretty as a child, but take care, Casper, how you encourage that will of hers: two cannot play that game in one house.’

‘How you go ahead, mother. She—’

‘Hush!’

Nina came bounding in, followed by the bonne, with something over her arm.

‘Madame, l’enfant est méchante; she will not take this mantle — Ma’amselle,


viens.' She held it out, half laughing herself. 'M. Casper, please make her : ' but mademoiselle danced round me, laughing wickedly.

'Non, non, je ne viendrai pas, je te dis. M. Casper, suivez moi;' and with a bound she vanished through the window. I followed directly, in time to see her vanishing in the direction of the stables, and when I caught her there she was, with the finest of the spaniel pups on her shoulder, biting her golden curls.

'I am going to take him, Casper. Come along, and keep your nose down, sir.'

This last was to the puppy, which she held in her arms.

I could not deny her, and so led the



way to the boat-house, of which I had a key. I got out the small boat, built to hold one rower and one or two sitters. Nina watched me in her grave observant way, while I placed the stretcher, put in boat-hook and sculls, greased the rowlocks, and finally shipped the rudder, and laid the tiller ropes, covered with blue silk, ready. But when I offered to lift her in she laughed, swerved aside, and jumped in.

‘There, puppy, you sit at my feet,’ said she, sitting down and taking up the ropes. ‘I’m going to steer.’

‘You? Fayre Una doesn’t know how!’

‘Yes she does, M. Casper. Mrs Bury’s brother taught me; he used to take me often on the Serpentine.’


‘Those tiny hands haven’t the strength,’ said I incredulously, as I shipped my sculls and pulled out into the stream. ‘Hullo! what the devil’s the boat about?’

My exclamation was elicited by her head suddenly slewing sharply to port, and I was answered by a peal of laughter.

‘*Now* are my hands strong enough?’ said Nina, with such intense mischievous glee, that in my laughter I nearly caught a crab.

‘O Nina, you’ll kill me! I yield, I cave in!’

‘You had better; there now, we are all right again. Puppy was horrified at you—’



‘Keep your look-out, Captain Lennox, and don’t chatter.’

‘I am doing both :’ and certainly the large observant eyes were keeping a very bright look-out ahead, and there was no question about the other. ‘Casper, how old is puppy?’

‘Nearly four months, I think.’

‘Then it is time he was named. What shall we call him?’

‘Call him? let’s see; Lovel. Have you read Mrs Markham’s “England”—

“The cat, the rat, and Lovel the dog,
Rule all England under the hog?”’

‘Yes, I remember; but Lovel is ugly.’

‘Neptune,—he was the ocean-god.’

‘Neptune is common.’

‘Captain, you are “uncertain, coy, and hard to please.”’

She laughed at my new soubriquet, by which, *en passant*, I often called her. ‘What will suit you?—Jasper?’

‘No, that will rhyme with Casper. I shall call him Colin, and his master’s surname will do for him.’

‘Or his mistress’s. I think you must have him, Captain. Colin Lennox sounds well.’

‘Have him? for my own?’

‘Yes, blue-eyes, for your own, only Baylis must keep him in the stable-yard till he is six or seven months old.’

‘You are very kind, Casper.’

She sat silent for some time, steering really capitally. At last she said,

‘We are going down-stream, are we not, Casper?’

‘Yes, London way.’

‘I want to go faster; give way. More still,—lay out well.’


‘Mind your helm there, Captain;’ but I threw a glance ahead myself now and then, but in a little while she stopped me.

‘Lay on your oars, Casper; do you see astern?’

‘Yes, a lovely view, Una; what else?’

‘There is a boat coming on, with one man in it; let’s wait till he is close, and then race.’

I looked. We were hugging the left bank, the stranger the right; and I watched him admiringly, as he came easily on, not with the usual river stroke



but pulling the long steady man-o'-war stroke, with the slight rest on the oar each time he feathered. It was beautiful; for looks there is nothing like that man-of-war stroke, though most river-men question its utility on the river. I don't.

The river lay wide between us, but as he drew nearly opposite, I thought that I had seen that broad Calabrian hat before. I felt almost sure; yet 'no,' I muttered, 'surely no foreigner ever pulled that long, strong, English stroke.' My doubts were soon ended, for as he became our *vis-à-vis* that wicked Nina stood right up, and shouted,

'Boat ahoy! we're going to race you!'

The stranger lay on his oars directly, and turned his head. How I wished that

hat was in the river. The next moment he waved something white in his hand, and called across,—not loud, but every word came distinctly,


‘Ah, bonjour, petite ! M. Von Wolfgang, je suis très charmé de vous revoir.’

I was right ; it *was* him, then,—the strange rider.

‘Does he know you, Cas ?’

‘Only my name,’ said I, indignantly. ‘I *will* race him now,’ and I shouted back, ‘I’m sorry I can’t return the compliment. I’ll outrace you, and chance the ducks ;—neck or nothing.’

He leaned forward over his sculls, laughing, I am sure ; then he answered, in his soft voice and deliberate English, never clipping words,



‘It would not be fair play. I am a bearded man, and you are a lad.’

A lad, indeed! I would beat him now, a tall, slight whipper-snapper! A foreigner have the impudence to tell me, an Englishman (?), that it wasn’t fair to race me on my own element. In my ire, I forgot the way I had just seen him handle his boat. I had the advantage, too, for my boat was a small, light, sharp-built skiff, and my sitter was a feather-weight, while his, though a beauty certainly, and sharp at the head, was sea-built, broad rather in the beam, and much larger than mine, carrying two sitters and two rowers.

‘Lad or not,’ I called, ‘I’m your match and better, for my skiff is a feather.’

‘Eh perché! I will take your sitter,

give you half a mile, and beat you in twenty minutes.'

'The devil you will, though! I won't trust you with my sitter,' said I, settling myself in my seat, and shipping my sculls. 'Come, get yourself ready.'

'Do you see that weeping willow a quarter of a mile ahead?'

'Yes, of course.'

'Bien! I will wager you three louis-d'or to a shilling that I give you that start, and pass you in twenty minutes. After that I will race fair,—if you demand it. Start when I throw up my handkerchief.'

'Done!' I laughed scornfully. 'Now, Nina, drop the ropes, and sit still,' I added, pulling easily down towards the willow.


'I know; look at him.'



I saw him kiss his hand to her, and then, cool as a cucumber, 'light up,' and lie down in his boat, resting his head on his hand, watching me, I knew. I waved my cap defiantly, and was answered only by a huge puff of blue smoke which hung lazily about him on the still atmosphere.

In a short while I reached the willow, and there, pausing ready, looked back after my antagonist. He stood up, flung aloft his kerchief, and then very leisurely seated himself, and took his sculls, but he did not start till full a minute after me.

Then the race began, Nina holding my watch, to mark the time. I was young, strong, and skilful, and knew better than to give out my strength too much at first, so did he, or else he was playing with me,



but I confess that after a little while I felt a qualm of oppressive doubt cross me when I saw his long steady sweep; still as yet he was not gaining on me.

‘Time, Nina?’


‘Five, no, seven minutes have passed.’

‘We shall beat. Look how far he is.’

And warm now to my work, I put forth my full strength, and gave way with a will. The skiff flew, but in a few minutes Nina’s pointing finger made me glance at my rival. Ye gods! how he was bending to his oars; what power and vigour there was in every long stroke. I could not disguise it from myself—he was gaining.

‘Time again?’

‘Ten minutes.’



I pulled, and watched in silence. Those terrible strokes ! he was coming up hand over hand now ; every moment the distance was lessened, and that without any visibly extra exertion on his part. There was a man on the bank, and as I shot past he shouted,

‘ If you was a pulling for dear life, younker, t’other ’un would beat ye into next July.’

‘ You be hanged ! ’ returned I with a lad’s irate rudeness.

‘ Fifteen minutes,’ timed Nina, but in two minutes she pointed to the right bank, with ludicrously grim despair, saying breathlessly, ‘ *Pull* now, Casper.’

I glanced across the river, and pulled as if indeed for very life, but I might


have spared my exertions. He passed us by, shot on, and crossed our bows two hundred yards ahead, laying on his oars a moment to salute courteously, —insolently, I secretly stigmatized it.

‘I salute you, M. Casper. It wants two minutes yet to the twenty. Do you demand an even race?’

‘You add insult to injury,’ answered I, with a laugh, that made a bad attempt to conceal my vexation.

‘I only offer you revenge, but if you decline, *qu’importe à moi!* I will take my leave. *Au revoir, monsieur! belle petite, adieu.*’

He kissed his hand again to Nina, and pulled rapidly away down the river. I turned homeward.



‘Never mind, Nina ; we did our best,
and any way had a good race.’

‘Didn’t we ? Look, Cas, he’s gone.’

I saw the speck vanish round a bend,
and it was gone.


So for the second time in my life I
lost sight of the stranger.

MANUSCRIPT V.

ALLINGTON LODGE.

WITH the close of the autumn we turned our backs on Stone-Heath, and went to our town house for the winter ; though, as usual, we spent Christmas-time with my brother Walter at Falconbridge Hall ; and I remember how he and his young wife were more and more charmed by Nina Lennox.


I would pass over those days of youth if I could, for it pains me inexpressibly



to recall them ; but there is one whose path I crossed, whom it were better I had died before I saw.

My brother Falconbridge was, I have said, my guardian, though he was only seven or eight years my senior ; and this Christmas it was arranged that at Easter I should go for a year or so, previous to going to college, to a certain Dr John Fantony, who kept a very select sort of collegiate academy. He took no lad under fourteen, and so famous was he for the excellence of his teaching, that it was well known that most of his pupils took good, some very high, degrees at college.

So I was to go there, and Nina was to have masters at home ; but I consoled her for the loss of her playmate, by assuring




her that I could see her often, as Dr Fantony's house was within easy reach, being at a village called Allington, about five or six miles west of London. Indeed, we arranged that sometimes on a half-holiday she was to ride down with Baylis and go for a ride with me; for I was to have my horse kept at the village, as one or two of the pupils were allowed to do. This compromise in some measure consoled Fayre Una; and when Easter came and the day of departure arrived, she was very good and quiet, though after I was gone Theodora took her to spend the day with her own two children, infants of one and two years old, of whom Nina was very fond.

It was a Wednesday afternoon, I well




remember, and the most lovely weather that any one could desire.

Allington Lodge—for so was Dr Fantony's spacious dwelling called—was a large old-fashioned house of Elizabethan structure, situated within good grounds, the gates of which opened on a road skirting the wide open common in which Allington rejoiced, and which was evidently used as a play and cricket ground; for as the brougham passed along I saw a number of lads, mostly in white, playing a cricket match. How well I remember speculating whether any of them were my future companions, and if so, which party—in-side or out-side? In the midst of my speculations, the carriage entered the grounds and stopped before the house.



I was an old hand at schools, and with perfect *sangfroid* I followed the footman to a sort of study, not even awed by finding myself *tout-à-coup* in the presence of the master himself.


I think Dr John Fantony was one of the handsomest men I have ever seen, and one of the most good. Old no one could have rightly called him, though he numbered fully fifty-seven or -eight years, and his hair, still thick and curly, was perfectly grey. He was a tall, imposing, dignified-looking man, but with something inexpressibly soft and gracious in his manner and bearing. And what a noble countenance he had ; what a fine head and forehead, at once benevolent, intellectual, and firm, the large comprehensive powers



of a grand nature. No wonder such a man turned out pupils who left their mark in the world; no wonder that those pupils idolized him while with him, and were proud to count him their friend when they started in life. Many of his younger lads were the sons of men who had themselves been his pupils years before.

Most kindly and courteously he received me, but how keenly those bright, full, blue eyes watched me,—reading me, I am sure, much more closely than I then suspected.

Having ascertained that I had dined, and conversed a little, he rose and said, smiling, ‘ There, I am keeping you talking, while you are doubtless anxious to see



your companions. Come, I will introduce you to those who are within reach, for you see, being half-holiday, they are all scattered. The greatest number are on the common, engaged in, or looking on at, a match between our first eleven and another school; some have gone over to the river; and the rest are out on a long walk. Shall we go to the cricketers? Of course you are a votary of that noble English game?’

‘Oh yes, sir; but pray don’t trouble yourself to come out on my account.’

‘No, lad, it is partly for you, partly for them.

‘Why,’ said he, with a pleasant genial smile as he took up his hat, ‘if I didn’t go out to see them a bit, when the lads



came in it would be, "Dr John, you never came out at all; oh, Dr John, we had such a game, only you weren't there." So we'll go to them, lest they complain that the old man did not show his face.'

He spoke and evidently felt towards 'his lads' as a father. I perfectly understood their affection.

We went out to the common, but before we reached the scorers' bench, near which most were gathered, one or two perceived him, for I heard a delighted exclamation.

'Here he is! here's Dr John!'

And 'Dr John' walked up and introduced me to the boys, many of them almost young men, who gathered about him.

‘Lads,’ was his characteristic introduction, ‘I have brought you your new companion, Casper Von Wolfgang; make the best of each other that you can.’

Which we did. I was absorbed at once into a number of boys, and overwhelmed with questions, which I answered truly or not, as best suited me.

‘Hold hard,’ said I at last, ‘it is my turn now.’

‘Is it though, Mr Wolf?’ laughed a round-faced boy of fourteen, ‘you haven’t yet told us if you’re a cricketer.’

‘Of course I am,—beat you all.’

‘Indeed,’ said another, ‘you’d be clever to beat some of our first eleven. Now, just watch the play a bit.’

‘Which is in?’ said I.

‘Reid’s boys, second innings; we’re licking them, though some of their fellows are older than most of ours; but you see, our fielding is better, and we’ve got one or two very crack round-hand bowlers that they can’t match. D’ye twig the bowler to the right? that tall dark chap in the blood-crimson cap and belt, and white toggery?’

‘Yes; looks about sixteen.’

‘Ay, but he ain’t that by a year. Well, he can *bowl*, I tell you.’

‘So I see, swift, straight, and scientifically. What style he has! What is he? who is he?’

I was answered in chorus,—

‘He’s a brick.’

'A stunner.'

'A regular slap-up cove, and no mistake.'

'I'm as wise as I was before,' said I, when I could put in my oar; '*who* is your Bonnet-rouge?'

There was a laugh at this soubriquet, and then one answered,—

'His name is Stewart Claverhouse, and the best chap you can imagine.'

'Deuced rich too,' added a youth of seventeen; 'his governor's dead, croaked long ago; and no loss either, for I fancy he was a horrid old stick. The Doctor is Claver's guardian and grand-uncle.'

'He don't look old enough for that,' remarked I.

'He's sixty, and Stewart only fifteen.

By George! there's a skyer! Leg will catch it! no,—yes; well caught, Dunlop!

There was a shout of applause as 'leg' caught the ball, and the man out came in, but he had done his duty, and was cheered by his own side. As he passed us, he said laughingly,

'I wish your captain would take off that crimson-capped bowler and put on another, you really work him too hard.'

'Pray, young man,' inquired one of 'ours' politely, '*do* you perceive the verdant in my optical organ?'

'In yours, sir, personally, yes,—in your captain's, no,' answered the other, laughing.

'I say, isn't that Tom Rawcroft going in?' asked one.

‘Yes, why?’

‘You won’t get many runs off *his* bat.’

‘Why not, Mister Verdant Orb?’

‘He can’t stand against either Claverhouse’s bowling or Seymour’s, and your other chap in with him is a rash runner.’

The other shrugged his shoulders and turned away, while I, at least, turned my attention to the game; and a very pretty sight is a cricket-field on a fine day. But of all there I found myself almost unconsciously watching most attentively that tall, dark lad, of whom they all had made so much. I was impatient for the last wicket to go down that I might see him near.

It came at last, and in his over too. The ball left his hand, and the next moment the last man’s middle stump was

ripped out of the ground and sent flying some yards behind the wicket, amidst an irresistible cheer. Then the whole field came trooping up to rest before we went in for our second innings. I was presented to ten of the fielders, but the eleventh was not so curious, the one I wanted most of all, 'Bonnet-rouge.' I saw him standing by the scorers' tent, the ball still in his hand. One of the players, Seymour, saw my glance, and sung out,

'Claverhouse, come here a bit.'

He came up directly.

Mr Verdant Orb, who seemed the school-jester, and was really named Tom Dacre, played master of the ceremonies.

'Gentlemen, permit me; Mr St Leger Von Wolfgang, direct descendant of Baron


Munchausen himself,—Mr Stewart Graham Claverhouse, the first bowler in all the United Kingdom, beats all creation.'

'Punch, don't be a fool,' said Bonnet-rouge, shaking hands with me. 'I saw you long ago. Are you a cricketer?'


'He has dubbed you Bonnet-rouge,' said Punch before I could answer, 'but I guess your house never turned out a republican.'

Young Claverhouse shook his head and then addressed one of the others.

Well, I had my wish. Was he as striking near as far?—yes, if for nothing but his beauty; and how the white loose dress and red belt became his tall, slight, supple figure, of which every attitude and movement was so graceful; how the crimson



cap set off the silky raven-black hair that curled in thick masses over his noble, aristocratic head—an artist's head and face of the high cast which makes a Michael Angelo. What a nobly handsome man he would be,—and he had no mother ! What was it about him that had struck me ? not an expression, strangely quiet and melancholy even when he smiled, that lay deep in the large dark eyes, and instantly made one think of the portrait of Charles I.,—no, not that, not his artist-face, but his voice and intonation, and—his hand. That small, beautifully-chiselled hand and slender, supple wrist ; that low musical voice and graceful intonation. Surely I had heard one of which his seemed the softer echo, and the hand too, smaller of course, even




yet more perfect in its chiselling, but still like the one I had declared I should know again. Yes, there could be no mistake : Stewart Claverhouse in these two things *did* remind me of the strange rider, the man of whom I hated to think ; and in that moment, like a secret subtle poison, there came stealing into my soul a dislike to this boy, the instinctive dislike one feels to something antagonistic and foreign, which the evil feels towards the good and noble, with which it has no *rapport*.

Had my spirit some darkened insight into the future ? Oh that I had died then ! Oh that I had died then at his feet.

MANUSCRIPT VI.

STEWART CLAVERHOUSE.

Do what I would, that boy's face and voice haunted me, and forced me, as if by some fascination, to look and listen. Do you know those rare voices that, alike in singing or speaking, you hear through any noise as you hear the softest note of music? his was such a one; and when he spoke I caught myself listening, and often trying *sotto voce* to repeat what he had said, with his accent and inflexion of voice, but in



vain. And even in class, my glance would wander to his face, trying to read it, to fathom the power he had of at once drawing and repelling me. Blind fool that I was ! a simple secret, if I could have read it then,—but I had eyes and saw not, and ears yet heard not, as it is written in that Book which I dare neither believe nor disbelieve. I remember only the morning after my arrival, I found him lying on the grass, reading a small volume, and I asked him,

‘What is that book you seem so interested in?’

‘It is Bacon’s Essays.’

‘What a dry concern to read,’ said I.

‘Not to me. Have you ever tried it?’

‘ Yes, and gave it up. What part are you reading ? ’

‘ At this moment my eyes are on a very true passage,—see.’

‘ No, read it to me. I like to hear you.’

It was a compliment which, in most lads, would have called the ready blood to the face ; it would in me ; but not him : no crimson tinged the clear colourless darkness of his cheek. He simply read what I asked.

“ The Scripture saith, The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God : it is not said, The fool hath thought in his heart ; so as he rather saith it by rote to himself, as that he would have, than that he can thoroughly believe it or be persuaded of it.” ’

I *dared not* look in that face, and utter the sneering denial that was almost on my lips : it was well for me that he did not lift his eyes ; he added, —

‘ The Atheist does not live who could convince me that, in his secret soul, he is an unbeliever in a Deity and a future, and I have met several scoffers, sceptics, freethinkers, abroad.’

‘ Abroad,’ repeated I, eager to escape a subject I feared to discuss with him.

‘ Have you been abroad, then ?’

‘ Yes, more than in England, since I was old enough to remember.’

‘ Were you born here ?’

‘ In England ? yes, in London ; but I was sent abroad when I was a child of eight or nine.’

‘With your father?’ ventured I.

‘No, to school; various schools.’

‘How do you mean? an odd education?’

‘My father had perhaps rather strange notions about education, but I don’t know that they were bad.’

‘How laconic you are, Claverhouse. Then you have been at heaps of schools, and under heaps of masters?’

‘A good many more than most boys, perhaps. I have been in Paris—’

‘At a school?—’

‘Yes; at Marseilles for a short while, and then at the Jesuit College at St Omer.’

‘Then you are a Roman Catholic?’

Stewart smiled.



‘No, and am never likely to be. I am Anglo-Catholic.’

‘Were you at St Omer long?’ said I, fearing the least touch of a religious subject.

‘No.’

‘Where did you go next?’

‘Per Bacco,’ said Stewart, smiling. ‘If I am taciturn, you are curious.’

‘You are the strangest boy of fifteen that ever I met,’ said I; ‘but you haven’t answered. Have you been in Germany?’

‘No; from St Omer I went into Italy.’

‘That is vague; what city or cities?’

‘I was first sent to Florence, after that to Rome, and then Milan.’

‘Were you long at each?’

‘Yes.’

‘Your father died long ago, one of them told me.’

‘It was a mistake ; he died when I was just fourteen, rather over a year ago.’

‘Were you in England ?’

‘Yes, I had just come over as usual to spend my vacation at home.’

‘And then ?—’

‘I was placed here.’

‘You are rich, are you not ? if you had been poor what profession would you have chosen ?’

‘Why do you ask ?’

‘Because I think I can name the one nature meant you for—’

‘What is that ?’

‘An artist, painter, sculptor, musician,
—I don’t know which.’

He lifted his great fathomless eyes for the first time and asked a question.

‘And what would you have been?’

‘Me! oh something where the work was light and the returns quick; ha, ha! not the answer you expected, eh?’

He looked at me for a minute steadily, and then answered quietly,

‘Yes it is; you hate poverty; you shuddered just now at the mere idea, and it almost follows that you dislike steady, hard work.’

‘Do you mean that a man who hates one must hate the other?’

‘I think that generally when you find a man hates and dreads poverty, the struggle of life, it is because he is at heart idle or unstable, and hates *to work*.’

‘It is easy for you to talk,’ said I,
‘who need and will never do a stroke
of work, mental or physical.’

‘Nay,’ he answered, gently, ‘you do
me an injustice. I do not talk without
acting. I could not live an idle life.’

‘That is, being rich, you will read
when you like, travel when you like,—in
fine, be busy only when you choose. Do
you call that *work* ? because I don’t.’

‘Nor do I. I call work choosing some
trade, profession, or calling, and following
it up.’

‘Which a man of fortune never does.’

‘Eh ! what then do you call our M.P.s
and politicians ? You cannot assert that
they work only when they like.’

‘No, not they, certainly. But that

is not like a trade or profession by which a man lives, and which no man ever takes to except to live.'

'Wolfgang, most men who choose their calling for themselves choose for something else besides mere existence.'

'Much you know about it at fifteen,' said I.

Again he gave me one of those keen looks which I was beginning to dread, and answered quietly,—

'I have not lived even fifteen years with my eyes shut.'

I could have sworn that. Those great observant eyes of his let nothing escape him.

'Well,' said I aloud, 'you talk so against idleness; what are you going to do?'

‘Leave this school at Midsummer.’

‘Leave! so soon? Oh, for a public school, you mean?’

‘No, I am going back to Florence.’

‘To school, or college?’

‘Neither.’

‘Laconic again Where, then?’

‘Into a sculptor’s studio.’

‘I hit the mark, then,’ I exclaimed;
‘when I saw you on the common, I said
to myself, “That chap is a born artist!”
When did you first get the fancy?’

Stewart paused before he answered,
and then it was with an evident effort
over his reserve.

‘I can hardly remember the time
when I had not the intention.’

‘Strange! It will be laborious.’



‘I know that: it is laborious to toil up a lofty mountain, but when you have gained the highest—’

‘Claverhouse, you are ambitious, very ambitious.’

A curious smile quivered for a moment about his delicate lips, but he only said,—

‘And you are not,—at present?’

‘Not I! I certainly don’t care to take up any profession for the love of either work, art, or fame. You don’t understand that, eh?’

He half-laughed, and rose, shaking back his coal-black hair.

‘Not quite; but, then, you are—’ he stopped.

‘Are what? finish.’

‘Ce n’est rien.’

‘Yes, it is. What were you going to say?’

‘It was an involuntary thought, and might offend you, which I should be sorry to do.’

‘No, it won’t,’ said I impetuously. ‘Finish your speech; you are what?’

‘Comme vous voulez,’ said he, shrugging his shoulders. ‘I was going to say that you are young, and have plenty of time to change or develop qualities now dormant; few lads of our ages know what they possess or wish.’

‘You seem to know, deuced well,’ said I, feeling much more forcibly than I liked that in every way I was before my superior.

‘I know what I like, and, to a certain

extent, what I am, and what I can do,' he answered quietly.

'Do you know, then, that you are very reserved and proud?'

'I believe I am.'

'Are you fond of study?'

'Yes, I always was.'

'I wasn't till two years ago, then I saw its value. Your education has been desultory?'

'No, you are mistaken; it has been unbroken.'

'Of course, brought up so,' said I. 'You are a linguist?'

'Nay, I cannot lay claim to that title; of course, French and Italian I can speak, and I know a little German,—but that is all.'

‘You are a classic; I heard Dr John tell one—’

‘Never mind what he says, he is over partial,’ he interrupted quickly, and walked away.

‘Proud, ambitious, and sensitive,’ muttered I, looking after him, ‘and very gifted; beyond my comprehension, too; but for all that, you fascinate me against my will. Stewart Claverhouse, there will never be much love lost between us two.’

No love, certainly; on my part, at any rate, for each day made me feel more and more how completely he passed me by; but his feelings I could not read; he was so courteous to all, so utterly unselfish, so almost impossible to rouse to anger, where only he himself was concerned, that he

baffled me. He joined in, nay, was often the ringleader in all our boys' manly games; but, though a general favourite and friendly with nearly all, he had no chum; some, of course, he liked better than others, but he had no *friend*, no mate: there was something which none of them could pass. His slowness to take offence, and openly-expressed dislike to a quarrel or fight, blinded me into misjudging him, until Seymour, a sharp fellow older than me, opened my eyes. It was a full fortnight after my arrival that I said with a laugh,—

‘There seems no offending Bonnet-rouge. I don't think he cares to fight.’

Seymour gave me such a look.

‘I'll tell you what, Wolf, don't you




try it on too far, unless you want a thrashing.'

'He!' said I scornfully, 'he couldn't lick me, for though he's taller, he's a regular whipper snapper, so slight; look at his hands.'

'Don't care; for all his slightness he's your match, and more too; he is all muscle and spring. Claverhouse is hard to rouse, but when he *is*, he is an ugly customer.'

'All my eye! if he's plucky, why does he shirk a fight?'

"If!" he's as plucky as the devil, only he don't gas-blow. Here is a Spanish proverb, "Beware of the silent man, and the dog that does not bark." Stewart hates a row, partly because he thinks it ungentlemanly; but, though he takes




things so easy for himself, let him see injustice from the strong to the weak, and he is roused directly, and then, I tell you, against anything of his match he is a formidable foe.'

'Come, come, Seymour; Clavers isn't over strong.'

'The deuce he isn't! no, not of the heavy-weight sort; you, for instance, could lift and carry a weight under which he would break down.'

'Ay, and in a stand-up fight I should floor him.'

'Not you; for one, he would not let you get a knock-down blow at him, he's so lithe and active and skilful. His strength is that of the Arab horse, endurance, that is, principally; but look at his



make and muscle, he is too well and evenly made not to be strong physically. I'd back him against you any day, to stand fatigue, at walking, riding, rowing, or anything else.'


'You would lose, then,' said I, with a curling lip; 'and as to the fighting—'

'Well now, look here, Wolfgang! you know Norton.'

Norton was a big, strong fellow of seventeen, one of the few that Stewart did not much affect.

'Yes, what of him?'

'Norton, you will soon find out, is inclined to bully. About a month after Claverhouse came here, he, Norton I mean, was badgering a little chap of twelve in the play-ground, knocking him about




shamefully. Stewart turned directly, and went up to him, very quiet in his manner, but still waters are deep. "Let little Netherby alone," he says. "Mind your own business, and be damned, you foreign whelp," says Norton, politely, you may believe. "If you don't let him alone, I'll make you." "You! lathe, you daren't touch me; I'd pound you. Stop till I've settled Netherby, and I'll polish you off, youngster, for meddling."

'Stewart said no more, but acted. In a second he had little Netherby behind him, flung off his jacket, and with a quick "Defend yourself," let fly a blow that took Norton scientifically between the eyes, and made him reel, seeing more stars, I'll bet, than ever were created. Then there

was a battle worth seeing. If Norton could have got a few heavy blows, or closed with him, he would have borne the lad down by sheer weight and brute strength, but Stewart's skill, serpent-like agility, and strength too, were more than his match. There was a sharp contest, and at last suddenly Norton went down like a log, and lay there beaten. Claverhouse just glanced at him, and walked off without a word, never a taunt or a sneer, but he's never liked Norton since then, not because of the fight, but the injustice he did. Look you, Stewart is one of those that may forgive, but never forgets. I shall be sorry when he is gone, for he's a brick.'

'He's a cure,' said I, not at all inclined



to join in his praises ; ‘ come in, there is the dinner bell.’

And yet ten minutes after, when I found myself his *vis-à-vis* at dinner, I could not keep my eyes from glancing at him, nor my ears from listening to his voice.

MANUSCRIPT VII.

A FEARFUL BÊTE NOIRE.


‘My lord, beware of jealousy! it is the green-eyed monster which doth make
The meat it feeds on.’

So with bitter truth wrote Shakespeare three hundred years ago. True then, true now, true as long as the world exists and man lives. Is it a feeling or a passion, or one and both—this subtle poison that corrupts the very spring of life, and maddens brain and heart; this foul seed that, in corrupting, rots the soil in which it is

sown; this hell-sent serpent that, coiled amongst the flowers, makes a wilderness of the fairest garden, and blasts every breath of air, every moment of time, with a deadly poison; this dark, guileful thing that creeps and winds and crawls through the world, leaving only misery to mark its trail? Is *this* the arch-fiend of which men speak? *this* the devil that tempts men on to sin and crime?

Was it this that stood ever between me and he who would have been my better angel? it had no place in him,—his soul was too grand, his faith too sublime for anything so base, least of all for this most torturing, most base of passions.


Had Stewart Claverhouse any virtue in being what he was? had he made himself?



was it his doing or Nature's that evil seemed to pass him by almost scathless? had he given himself that large intellect, that versatile genius and strong will and energy, or the high-wrought pride and lofty ambition that in him were virtues?

He passed me by, was my superior in everything, ay, in all that had hitherto been my cherished superiorities. In study I was not his equal by a long way; at anything that demanded mere weight or personal strength I was the superior, but at anything requiring skill and agility he was master absolutely, not by any exertion, but because he could not help it.

I had always been held a very good rider, boater, swimmer, et cetera, but here I found myself second at once. Where or



how he had learned I know not, but he could swim as I had never done; and with an oar in his hand he was at home, a boat was as a toy in his hand; and certainly no Arab of the desert ever rode his fiery steed with more grace and perfect mastery than did this boy. He had the most magnificent black mare, an Arabian, that I ever saw; and though few but him, if any, cared to ride her, she would come to his voice and follow him like a dog. When he was mounted on Ayesha he always looked to me like an embodiment of my favourite German legends, with his dark beauty, raven hair, and the coal-black steed. There was another thing about him, too, which at times has made me start and shiver in vague nervousness,—his ubiquity. He cer-

tainly had the nearest approach to that fabled power, if it *is* fabled, that I ever saw. I have never, save in him, seen such extreme lightness and almost serpent-like suppleness of form, or such a swift and perfectly noiseless footfall. He would come upon you suddenly where you had just seen him, where it seemed hardly possible he could reach you so soon. Many a time when I have been in a dark room he has come in. I have neither seen nor heard him, but I have *felt* his presence. Still more marked was it when the case was reversed. Often I have gone to the library or music-room to fetch a book in the dark (for I knew where to look), when, to all appearance, sight, or hearing, it was empty, when any-one else might have been there and escaped

my detection, but him, no! I could feel his presence directly. I always spoke. 'Claverhouse, you are here?' to dispel the weird feeling of nervousness it gave me. I cannot describe the thrill that always quivered through me when I heard his soft, gentle voice answer out of the gloom,

'Yes, I am here.'

Generally I hurried away, glad to be beyond that strange influence, but one night I paused and asked, 'And what are you doing here, alone in this dark music-room?'

'Cannot you see where I am?'

'No; but your voice comes from the piano.'

'You have answered yourself.'



‘How? do you mean that you have been at the piano? you can’t see the music.’

‘I have not been using any music,’ he answered.

‘No! can you improvise, then, like your favourite, Mendelssohn?’

Stewart laughed a little, half-amused.


‘No; I was only amusing myself.’

‘Will you let me hear you, Stewart? you know how fond I am of music.’

‘I know, and therefore I don’t think I should give you pleasure.’

‘Let me judge of that. I will tell you when to stop; and they won’t miss us in the drawing-room. Come, be good-natured.’


‘Eh, bien.’



The next moment his light fingers touched the keys, bringing forth most beautiful, and to me most wonderful, modulations, with a soft mournful melody running through every change ; there was a strange wild weirdness about it that was almost unearthly, and for me had a peculiar fascination. I stood listening, entranced, how long I know not, for I took no note of time, no heed of anything, save the music and the slight dark form dimly discernible through the gloom. I think, too, that he had forgotten he was not alone, for presently he shut the piano abruptly, and came towards me.

‘Claverhouse, why did you stop and break my dream?’

‘I remembered that you were here at




last, and stopped, lest I should weary you.'

'I have not heard half enough; but, Stewart, is your music always so melancholy?'

'You give it a grand name. I don't know; if it is, I can't help it. Shall we go up to the drawing-room now?'


He left the room, and I followed him; and after that I often made him play for me, sometimes his own inventions, but more often his or my favourites amongst the great composers. Can you understand these contradictions in me? I admired, I wondered at his genius, but whilst it drew me to him, at the very moment that I was availing myself of it jealous hatred of that very genius, which



lifted him so far above the rest—above *me*, was slowly, but surely, filling my heart and soul. There must have been some terrible leaven of evil in me,—I, a lad of sixteen, and yet possessed of so dark and unyouthful a passion as jealousy, and that while I could not resist the fascination.

‘In his eye
There is a fastening attraction which
Fixes my fluttering gaze on his ;
He awes me, yet draws me near.’

So it was. I was charmed, yet hating ; I sought, yet shunned. What did he think of me ? I would have given much to be able to answer the question, and could not, save that I felt he read me much more than I cared to acknowledge to myself ; beyond that I was in the dark. He



certainly did not avoid me, but as certainly he did not seek me; he did for me anything I asked, if he could, with exactly the same kindness and courtesy that he showed to every one, and no more; he suffered me to seek him out, and thus practically I was so often with him in the play-ground, in walking or riding, that soon we were held to be chums—not for long, though: he soon upset that belief as far as he was concerned. I overheard him and Seymour one evening, in the shrubbery.

‘So, Stewart, you have at last made a chum.’

‘I!’ the tone was very surprised.
‘What do you mean? Who thinks I have made a chum?’

‘All the chaps; why, you and Wolfgang are always together—regular mates.’

I heard Stewart’s soft musical laugh.

‘Is that all? he is no more a mate of mine than you, or Dacre, or any other; it is he who seeks,—not I.’

‘Then you don’t like him?’

I held my breath for the answer. I should have known him better: if he had hated me, it would not have been Stewart Claverhouse to let the word pass his lips.

‘How like you, Seymour, running ahead. If he were an unpleasant companion I should shake him off.’

‘Jesuit!’ muttered I, passionately. He might have liked or disliked me,—the answer would have done equally well for

either. One may find a man a most delightful companion, and yet utterly dislike *him*—his character. I was as much in the dark as before.


Seymour went on,—

‘You are a strange boy, Stewart; have you ever had a mate?’

There was a moment’s pause, and when Claverhouse answered, I knew by the peculiar quiet depth of his tone that some deep sorrowful memory was stirred.

‘I had one long ago, when I was in Rome. He was an Italian, much older than me, and I loved that man as I have never loved human being since.’

‘When you have been in Florence a short while, you are going back to Rome, are you not?’



‘Yes, with my *maestro*.’

‘Then you will see your friend?’

‘I shall not even see his grave: he was murdered by banditti.’

‘O Stewart, forgive me! I understand your solitariness now.’

Through the gloom I saw Stewart lay his hand on his arm, but that was answer enough, and the two moved away in silence.


A little more, and I have done with my boyhood and his.

One Saturday half-holiday Nina Lennox, attended by the groom, rode down to Allington Lodge, to have a ride. My chestnut and Claverhouse’s magnificent black mare were waiting ready for us when she came up; indeed, we were standing on the

steps chatting, and Nina gave a little cry of delight, as I ran down to meet her.

‘You are just in time, Fairy! Dear Nina, how glad I am to see your sweet face again; and, look, here is my companion, whom I wrote to you about,—Stewart Claverhouse,’ I added, as he came down the steps also to her side.

How that child gazed in his face, his very eyes for some seconds, and then, without a word, she jumped off her horse, stretched out both her hands to him, and lifted her innocent face for his kiss. A worshipper of beauty, passionately fond of children, he was, I saw, too deeply touched for words, but stooped over her in silence, as he clasped those tiny hands in his own, and kissed her eyes and lips.



How I hated him in that moment, for I remembered with a fierce thrill of anger and pain how very different had been her reception of me. I had had to coax and win, and then only been suffered to take what she instantly gave this stranger.

I stepped forward quickly.

‘Come, we had better mount.’

‘He shall lift me up, then,’ said Nina, rejecting my hand.

I turned to my horse, how savagely I best knew; but Stewart smiled, that beautiful winning smile of his, and lifted her to her saddle, then sprung to his own, and we cantered off, though the black mare curveted, wild for a gallop, and for some minutes she gave Stewart work enough to hold her in. I wished she had thrown him.

The moment her hoofs touched the turf of the common she gave a bound that would have unseated most riders.

‘I must give her rein for a minute,’ he said quickly, and left us like a shot.

The moment he spoke Nina started slightly.

‘Casper, his voice doesn’t sound quite strange: whose is it like? it reminds me of some other, and I can’t think what.’

‘Well, when I first heard it, it struck me directly as reminding me of the voice of that foreigner who raced us on the river.’

‘C’est ça! c’est ça!’ she said delightedly. ‘Casper, isn’t Stewart Claverhouse beautiful?’

‘Hush, child ; here he is.’

And as I spoke he came up, wheeled, and took up his former place at her side.

How perfectly I remember that ride. I never saw Claverhouse come out of himself so much as he did then for that child. Silent as he was by nature, she made him talk continually, and for her he did it with evident pleasure. She made him tell her of the foreign cities he had been in, the manners, customs, and various people he had seen ; a perfect sketch, in fact, of his life abroad.

‘And,’ she asked at last, ‘should you like to go back, and leave all your friends and relations?’

‘Yes, Nina ; but I have no friends or

relations, except Dr Fantony, my grand-uncle. I am going back to Rome.'

'Are you? what for?'

'I am going into a sculptor's studio.'

'To be a sculptor, a great famous sculptor?'

I laughed, but he answered quietly,

'Yes, if I live, Nina.'

'Shall you make beautiful statues?'

'I hope so—yes, I *will*.'

She turned her bright face to him with a curious wistful look.

'You will, too, keep one for me; O Stewart, keep one for me.'

'I will keep the most beautiful of all for Nina Lennox.'

'And bring it yourself,' she added, 'with your own hands?'

‘Yes, if it is possible, I will.’

‘You have promised?’

‘I have promised.’

He had pledged his word only for a trifle, only to a child, and I tried to believe that he would forget it; but try as I would, I knew in my secret soul that one day, it might be long years hence, he would return to fulfil that simple promise, —given for a trifle, given to a child.

MANUSCRIPT VIII.

THE PASSAGE OF TIME.

LET me in a few words close that first page of my life. Would that it had been my last!

Midsummer came, and Stewart Claverhouse went away. I remember that morning as if it was yesterday, to the very expression with which he looked up from a drawer he was turning out as I entered his room.

‘So you are really going, Claver-

house; how strange and odd Allington Lodge will be without you.'

He smiled slightly, a little sadly, I thought; but only shook his curling black hair.

'We shall miss you terribly, Stewart.'

'Thank you, Casper; not for long. I have been here too short a time to be missed much.'

'Stewart, is there nothing you regret to leave behind you in England?'

'Nothing.'

'Not one thing—not one human being?'

'Ah, si—the doctor; God bless his dear old grey head!'

God! why was it that, instead of the accustomed sneer, the tears came into my

eyes? was it some tone in his gentle voice that touched an almost hidden cord of good in me, or was it the earnest reverence and love with which he spoke?

‘But you will not be very long away?’ I said presently.

‘Very long,—probably many years.’


‘Shall you never see Dr John, then, for years?’

‘I shall come over sometimes to see him.’

‘And you are really leaving no one but him whom you will care to see again?’

‘I did not say that, Casper; there are some few whom I hope to see again—two or three.’

‘Any of the boys here?’



‘Ay, just that. Gus Seymour, and Tom Dacre—’

‘Who else?’

He suddenly raised his large dark eyes to mine.

‘And one Casper Von Wolfgang; we two shall meet again, but not for years,—not till we are both bearded men.’

‘Stewart, give me that miniature of you; there it lies in the drawer.’

He took it out, hesitated, and then said abruptly,—

‘Casper, you puzzle me; how can you care for this? you do not like me.’

I felt my quick Creole blood rush to my face. Was it true or not? or had I, indeed, two natures,—one filled with jea-

lous hate and self-conceit, the other inexplicably drawn to him, fascinated, charmed, impelled to seek him, yet knowing that there was ever something between us that barred all friendship? something in me that made him shrink, and jarred every nerve of his sensitive nature; something in him that made me fear him? I little guessed how closely he read me, boy as he was, and it was not until years after that I knew, from his own lips, what it was in me that stood between us.

I answered impulsively,--

‘I do like you! why else have I sought you out as I have?’

He shook his head slightly, evidently puzzled; unable to solve part of the mys-

tery, because he did not know his own powers of fascination.

‘Eh bien, voici le portrait,’ he said with a curious, wistful smile. ‘You are welcome to it.’


He held it out, but I closed my fingers round both it and the hand that held it.

‘Stewart, what made you say that we should meet again?’

‘I don’t know; a presentiment, something from the unseen world beyond this life.’

I shuddered. I felt my flesh creep.

‘Strange, weird being that you are, have you the fabled gift of second sight, from your Highland descent? you are a dreamer, fond of fabled beliefs.’



‘Fabled, Casper! oh, I forgot; you have no faith or God,—pover infelice.’

If I were to live a thousand years I shall never forget the deep, sublime pity of his look and tone: it was such as a mourning angel might have given fallen man. I dropped his hand and turned away. My eyes were blinded with tears, and it was many minutes before I could speak, and then I dared only ask an indifferent question.

‘Do you travel alone to Italy?’

‘Yes.’

‘Stewart, Stewart,’ called Dr John’s melodious voice, ‘are you ready?’

‘I am coming, Uncle Jack.’

Once more he held out that slight, beautiful hand; once more I wrung it

hard in my own, and so we parted for many long years.

How I missed him, everywhere and at all times,—his face, his voice, his laugh. We all felt that there was a blank not to be filled by any other.

Let me pass on quickly. For two years I remained at Dr Fantony's, and then my brother Walter sent me to Cambridge.

There money flew; my mother never knew how wild I was,—better to leave her in ignorance. No memory of her or *her* teaching ever arrested her son, but many a time, in the midst of the wildest revel, there would sometimes rise before me the memory of that beautiful artist-face, sculptured so perfectly by Nature's master-

hand, and those deep, strange eyes, that seemed ever to see something beyond this earth, and the mocking laugh or scoffing jest would die on my lips.

Yet, with all my wildness, I managed to work, and left college with a good degree, but I would enter no profession, and passed my time, like many other young men who are handsome, wealthy, and pleasure-loving, sometimes abroad, sometimes—mostly, of course—in England, but at last I set off, in a sudden fancy, for America, and travelled about, even trying prairie life, and thus I passed three years, during which my mother and Nina were travelling in France, Italy, and Germany.

Thus passed—shall I say was frittered away?—my early manhood, and I stood

at eight-and-twenty, where and what ? ~~and~~
~~where~~ and what was that other, born, like
me, to blood, wealth, and position ?

Since we parted, boys at school, twelve
years had passed, and I still remained,
only one of the many, a unit in the crowd,
an idler amongst the busy thousands, but
his name, the great sculptor's, was on all
men's lips. Fame had long ago laid her
laurels on the brow of Stewart Claverhouse.

MANUSCRIPT IX.

AMONGST THE RUINS OF THE COLOSSEUM.

My birthday ! a recurrence marking the flight of time,—eight-and-twenty almost wasted years, and I sat, an idle, purposeless man, amongst the ruins of the Colosseum, looking my farewell look on Rome, a bearded man, yet idle, purposeless, save in the pursuit of pleasure, envying others, their hard-earned fame, yet without the courage or energy to boldly enter the lists and emulate. So passing from the

great, yet living, my thoughts went back to the past, and, as in a dream, reared again those stately ruins into the grand whole they had once formed, and peopled them again with the great who had lived and died more than a thousand years ago. Whence came the mind that had thus set its indelible mark in things so vast? What if, after all, the very heathen in their graceful errors had been nearer a great mysterious truth than I and the school I followed in our philosophy? No; away the thought so absurd and humbling! had we lived a thousand years later, to be less wise and onlightened than they?

I was suddenly roused to the present by a figure which stepped from behind a column and paused before me.

‘Monsieur, voulez-vous acheter un
cameo, où une image? per l’ amor’ dell’
Madonna, Signor!’

A soft plaintive voice, with a most delicate languid accent, that fell on my ear in strange harmony with all around. A fitting voice and face to rouse me from my dreams—not quite an Italian face, either, for all its exquisite classic chiselling, and silky curling raven hair, and the melancholy beauty of the large dark eyes, seemed to belong by right to the voice. Yet she was a child in years, not more than fourteen or fifteen, and with her beauty and the picturesque dress of a Roman peasant might have stepped out of some fair picture.

‘You mix French and Italian,’ I said

in French, 'and each like a native. Are you Roman?'


'Non, Monsieur; je suis Provençale.'

'Provence! the mother of beauty and romance,' said I, 'but yet you speak Italian so perfectly.'

'Ah sì, Signor. Provence is my mother, but Italy is my balia.'

'Have you been long in Italy?' I asked, very much interested in this patrician wanderer.

'More than six years, Monsieur, mais voici! this gran' cameo, the Signor will buy it for his bell' inamorata,' and the girl held out a very handsome brooch with a bright smile that showed the small, white teeth, glistening between the crimson lips.



‘What if I have no bell’ inamorata, pretty one?’ said I, smiling.

The child gazed wistfully in my face, then looked down and gently shook her head.

‘The Signor jests; some maiden surely listens for his step and watches for his smile.’

‘Per Bacco,’ I answered lightly, ‘you know more than I do myself. Do you of sweet Provence pretend to the mystic and mythical lore of—’

‘Thessaly’ was the word, but I arrested it. How should this Transtiverina understand the allusion? To my utter surprise, the cameo seller quietly filled in the sentence.

‘—Of Thessaly of old, the Signor


would say; does he, then, think it all mythical? is all that is dreamy and mystic impossible?’

I started, and said,

‘Have you ever read what a French writer said, “Comme il n’y a rien d’impossible, croyons dans l’absurde”?’

Again the child gave me that wistful, searching gaze, and again the bright sunny southern smile showed the little white teeth.

‘Je l’ai lu, but Monsieur cannot think with what was probably written in irony. No man—’ with a slight stress on the noun, ‘believes in the absurd, but as there is nothing impossible we may not scoff at anything simply because it is incomprehensible.’



‘Nothing impossible?’ I repeated, interested in this strange, patrician-looking cameo seller. ‘Nothing impossible, carolina?’

‘Nothing with God, Signor,’ said the child, quickly; ‘we believe by faith what we cannot believe by understanding.’

I sat down on a large stone, and said, looking out towards the Eternal City,

‘That, you know, is asking a great deal of man’s intellect; the mind must see or comprehend to believe implicitly.’

‘The *mind* may, perhaps, Monsieur, sometimes; but it is the *soul* that worships and believes by faith,’ said the child, softly.


‘You set a great store by this faith,’ I

said, curious to see how she would answer;
‘ what is it ? ’

The Provençale looked surprised and
paused, but answered,

‘ Monsieur knows the words of il
gran’ San Paolo,—“ Faith is the substance
of things hoped for, the evidence of things
not seen. Through faith we understand
that the worlds were framed by the word
of God, so that things which are seen were
not made of things which do appear.”
Monsieur, without faith no man can believe,
and without belief there is no salvation.
And faith is so easy.’

‘ So easy ’ to her it was, but not to
me. What is man’s reason for if it is
to be satisfied with what will satisfy a
child’s ?



My face betrayed me, for she added, looking down,

‘It is very strange Monsieur will not accept things of heaven on faith, and yet he believes many earthly things by nothing else. He doubts the book of God, and accepts most books of man unhesitatingly.’

‘Nay, only a few,’ said I, startled again despite myself, just as Stewart used sometimes to startle me.

‘You accept most history,’ she answered directly. ‘You believe that Gian’ Galeazzo of Milan lived; you do not doubt that the Templars existed, or that China forms part of the world.’

‘The cases are not alike. History leaves palpable traces, and existing lands are their own evidence, and in what you quote

there is nothing hard of belief, but in that book—'

'The Bible, Signor.'

—'The Bible, there is much—I am mild—that taxes belief.'

'Not if Monsieur reads with the eyes of faith.'

'Say, rather, with the eyes of weak credulity,' said I quickly.

The child shook her head.

'Que la Vierge prie pour Monsieur,' said the soft, thrilling voice. 'What does he find so hard to believe?'

'Nay, I scarcely know how to define it in a few words. Many things that I cannot reconcile, many things that do not agree with each other.'

'Ah, Monsieur, mille pardons, but read

it again under the Church's teaching ; there is not one word that disagrees with another.'

'Indeed, fair theologian ! Do you, then, understand the mysteries that are mysterious still to the most learned and scientific men of Germany ?'

I saw the faintest shadow of a sarcastic smile cross the delicate lips of the cameo seller at my last words, and yet there was sadness too in her voice as she said,

'No ; I do *not understand* one quarter of them, but I believe every word as implicitly as I know that there is a God above those blue heavens. Mais pardon encore ! Monsieur says that the Bible puzzles the most learned men of Germany. Has he never read the words of

Christ,—“Thou hast hidden it from the wise and prudent, and revealed it unto babes;” and again, “Except ye have faith as a little child, ye shall in no wise enter the kingdom of heaven”?’

I rose abruptly, glancing above, then around. Behind, the stately ruins of the Colosseum reared themselves in a vast amphitheatre; before me lay the once mighty city that had ruled the world for so long—Rome, majestic even in decay, still holding the faint shadow of its ancient prestige, still the home of Art, and destined at no distant day, perhaps, to rise once again from its gigantic fall to be the head and capital of a new nation, strong and great in its unity, of which men shall say, in the words of Virgilius,

‘Terra potens armis atque ubere glebæ.’

Then I turned and looked on the Madonna-like face of the child, and somehow I dared not sneer, dared not say boldly, ‘I disbelieve in this God of yours, and therefore deny and refuse the very ground of your faith.’

But again her keen gaze read me.

‘Monsieur is a sceptic.’

I drew a deep breath, and fenced the question. ‘Nay; by blood I am a son of the legendary Rhine; how, then, can I do aught but worship at the shrine of the unknown?’

‘And reject the revealed,’ said the girl. ‘The Signor is, then, what is called a German sceptic—visionist for all man’s wild dreams, materialist to all the grand

truths that God teaches by His book and His works.'

This Italian Provençale was not to be deceived, and I said, without looking at her, 'But I do not exactly believe in this Deity of yours—this God.'

Her ear and eye must have caught the accustomed sneer which I had thought to conceal, for she said,

'Monsieur is more of the French than the German school,—he is a scoffer.'

I made no answer: for the first time in my life, bearded man as I was, I felt something like shame.

The Provençale stood looking out towards the ancient city, and at last said, half to herself, 'I wish—but he is gone from Rome just now—I wish Monsieur

could see and hear the great Signor maestro.'

'You mean the sculptor, about whom the world is wild. Why do you wish it?'

'Because surely Monsieur must then see that none but a God could create such as he.'

'Perhaps, if you lent me your eyes,' said I, willing to give stab for stab, but her clear, brilliant eyes did not droop, nor her pale cheek colour. My arrow missed, and I added quickly, to cover my defeat—

'You know him, then?'

How her mobile, expressive face brightened.

'Sì, ah sì, Signor, I was one of his models. See,' she added, opening a compartment of her box, 'here are photo-

graphs, and amongst them some of his statues for which I sat.'

I took the one she offered—and understood her. She was no common sculptor's model. Exquisite indeed was the pictured group of statuary on which I gazed, but the girl was gracefully draped, save, indeed, the shoulders and arms. Modesty herself could have wished no more.

'You are a strange creature,' I said, looking at her in wondering admiration; 'it just occurs to me that—'

'Monsieur has deigned to converse with a Roman peasant, a seller of *camei* and statuettes.'

'No, mon enfant, but that a Roman cameo seller, in the guise of a peasant,

should have such knowledge and thought.

You are surely not peasant born ?’

I was sorry I had asked, for she turned aside a moment before she answered.

‘ Monsieur is right. I am born of a race of gentlemen of Provence, but my father was a Legitimist, and joined a futile conspiracy ; it was discovered, and my father fled, leaving me a child of two or three years old. A lady took me with her to Italy, and educated me.’ She paused again, then added, ‘ Three years ago she went to the Madonna—ah, perdona—I mean, she died suddenly, and—me voici.’

‘ A cameo seller,’ said I ; ‘ a wanderer, with gentle birth and education,—pauvre petite.’

‘E perchè,’ said the child, lifting her dark, wistful eyes to mine; ‘as well a cameo seller as anything else, Signor il Tedesco.’

‘What is your name, pretty one?’

‘Anna-Marie de Laval, Monsieur; they used to call me Fleur-de-Marie.’

‘A graceful name,’ I said, touching the beautiful head pityingly; ‘but, pardon, you are no devout Catholic?’

‘Eh, ma foi ! gardez le silence ; I am Catholic, but little enough of a Roman Catholic. N’importe, they do not care for such as me.’ Then, with a sudden change in every delicate feature, she said,

‘And now see, here are statuettes, modelled after the works of il gran’ Maestro, and cameos of Rome and Florence :

will Monsieur have this brooch for the sake of his bell' inamorata ?'

'I will have it, caralina, for your sweet eyes and pleading voice,' said I, exchanging the brooch for a sovereign ; 'and whenever I think of Rome, I shall remember the cameo seller of the Colosseum. Adieu, Fleur-de-Marie.'

'I kiss the Signor's hand ; may he live a thousand years !' She was turning away, but something of significance in her tone impelled me to say,—

'Child, why *that* wish ?'

She looked back, and said, with an expression I could not quite understand—half irony, half pity—

'Because for the Signor after this life all is nothingness : he has no God.'


She turned away towards the city, and in the growing shadows I lost the slight form, though not the memory of her face, or—her faith. Since the day I had parted from Stewart Claverhouse I had heard no such words; and now—now it was too late. I was hardened. Believe? tush, no! after all, I was no worse than most men. They profess beliefs which they do not believe in their hearts, any more than me,—only I scoffed and avowed openly, and they wear a mask.

I left Rome that evening *en route* for England, but somehow that child's face haunted me.

CHAPTER I.


THE CHURCHYARD OF SAINTE AGATHE.

ALONE! a word often in our mouths with very little meaning attached to it. Go alone for a walk, alone all the morning, alone in a hundred other ways as passing; but alone in the world, that is a very different thing, grand in its solitude and misery. To stand amongst the crowd, all fighting and pushing their way, and know that of all these thousands not one has any concern with you; that there




is not a living being who knows you, or cares whether you rise or fall, live or die ; no one to look to or love ; no one to touch you gently, or give you a kind word ; a friendless, homeless wanderer,—*alone* in every sense of that word.

Yet such was Fleur-de-Marie, the Roman cameo seller,—the worse for her, poor child!—with her great beauty and education, born and bred a lady till nearly three years back, and then suddenly hurled down to the very bottom ; cast utterly alone on the world, at an age too young to earn her bread in any way suitable to her birth ; gifted far above the average, and perhaps prematurely matured and developed in mind by the stern necessity of her fate ; tall for her



years, too, looking more like fifteen than fourteen, yet with something sad and touching about her in her face and eyes, that would make a strong man involuntarily touch her tenderly, and call her 'child,' as if in that word she had a claim on his masculine strength and protection, as she had. God help her. Alone! what made the solitary child feel her friendlessness so bitterly and heavily this bright summer's day? perhaps the very sunlight, so different to her own dark fate; perhaps (for our nature is made of contrasts) the very place she sat in,—no longer classic Rome, from which she had wandered, but the burial-ground of a little church in legendary Heidelberg. It was a mournful place, where, perhaps, many a martyr



slept in peace ; but the child had passed them by after a while, and strayed to a lonely corner, where, under an old cypress tree, lay a tiny grave,—the grave of a very little child, and there she sat down, weary and sick at heart, with her cameo box at her feet, her face resting on her hand, and her dark eyes gazing out on the quaint old German town, of which they took in so little, for the mind was far away in fair Provence and sunny Italy, where her brightest years had been passed ; and the beautiful head sank lower, and the black eyes filled, till she suddenly covered her face with a low passionate wail—


‘ O Madonna mia, take me ! Oh, that I were dead ! oh, that I were dead ! ’




A light hand was laid gently on her shoulder, and a deep, soft voice said tenderly, in Italian,—

‘ My child, you are too young for such a sorrowful wish.’

The child started, and looked up in the dark foreign face stooping over her,— a handsome distinguished head and face, a man to be marked out among a multitude,—tall, slight, supple in form, the fine head covered with curling black hair, the dark bronzed complexion clear and colourless, every feature most delicately chiselled, but with deep lines about the stern reckless mouth and broad brow that told of trouble and care. The large deep eyes, of the darkest hazel colour, were keenly observant of everything and every-



body, reading others, but themselves impenetrable. He was evidently a citizen of the world, one of those men who have pretty well knocked about everywhere, and done and seen as much in his six-and-thirty years as the less reckless unquiet spirits go through in a lifetime as long again; not a man for whom life had gone easily or happily—far from it, and not a man, either, who did or could take all things easily, and turn aside the shafts of sorrow and care with a laugh. No; both had struck him deeply, and left their wounds. The history of his changeful life was no story of roses,—in much, perhaps, his own doing; most men's thorns are at least half their own planting, and he was probably no exception.



‘My child,’ he repeated, touching her with a hand that, for its beauty, might have served a sculptor as a model, ‘you are too young for such a sorrowful wish.’

The child started at his voice as one might at the echo of one we know, and looked earnestly and wistfully in the handsome face, and then came a simple plaintive answer, whose unconscious pathos touched him to the quick.

‘Ah, Signor, I am alone.’

The stranger sat down on the grave.

‘What have you been thinking of, this last half-hour, piccola?’

Her startled look said so plainly, ‘I thought I was alone,’ that he answered as if the words had been uttered,

‘I have been studying your face for a long time.’

The cameo seller shivered, and shrunk away as if he must have found something guilty there; but he seemed to read and understand the sensitive spirit, and, stooping, he lifted a brooch.

‘You have wandered here from Rome, I see, but this cameo is from Florence, the city of art.’

The Provençale’s expressive face changed directly, and lighted up.

‘Bell’ Firenze! has the Signor been there? does he love art and beauty?’

‘As much as you do, *fanciulla*. I know all Italy; strange if I did not.’

‘The Signor is Italiano?’ said the child, a little doubtfully.

He half laughed, but there was both pain and bitterness in his answer.

‘*Sì, caralina*, if you will; *Italiano* as well as any other. I am a cosmopolitan, a citizen of the world, belonging to any country which suits me; and at present it suits me to bear a French name—Guy Count de Cavagnac, which could at convenience easily become Guido di Cava-gno, *savez vous?*’

‘*Oui, Monsieur, parfaitement.*’

‘And you,’ he added, ‘are *Provençale.*’

‘*Comment!*’ said the child, opening her large dark eyes; ‘how can Monsieur guess my province?’

‘Not so very difficult, *petite*, when I know every province of France, and have

been watching your face for half-an-hour.'

'Monsieur is a great traveller?'

'Ay, I have knocked about these twenty years; you should be one, too, pauvrete.'

'Moi? ah non, I am only a wanderer.'
And the fine head drooped again.

'What is your name, my child?'

'Anna-Marie de Laval, Monsieur; mais on m'appelle Fleur-de-Marie.'

'A name beautiful, like yourself; but, pardon, you are not born to this?'

'No, Signor il Conte.'

'It is a hard life for one so young and delicate as you; do you sell only *camei*?'

'No, Signor; statuettes, too, and I

often sit to artists. Sometimes, too, I sing in choruses at operas.'

'Do you always earn enough to get warmth and food?'

'No, Monsieur, often not; then I sleep in a church portico, and it seems nearer the Madonna, where the buona Signora went.'

'What buona Signora? will you tell me your story, my child? you have already made up your mind to trust me, I see.'

'Foi de mon âme! is Monsieur a magician?' said the Provençale, smiling; 'but he is right. We who are at the mercy of the strong learn to use silent weapons, to read faces and voices.'

'A weapon I have used all my life,' said Guy de Cavagnac, struck by an

answer so unlike a child, 'and in your last words you have confirmed my judgment of you.'

'And that is—'

'The same as yours of me—you are to be trusted.'

'Trusted! Who would trust the out-cast—the poor cameo seller—a vagrant?' said the southern, with sudden passionate bitterness. 'Monsieur's mother or wife would draw their robe away, lest it should touch and contaminate them; do it with haughty pity, that wrings curses from me. "Poor child," les grandes dames will say, "how can she be anything else?" I could kill them!'

'I have neither wife nor mother, and if I had they would not treat even the worst

of their sex harshly. Tell me your story now, Fleur-de-Marie.'

She told him simply, but with more details than she had given to Casper Von Wolfgang.

The stranger's first comment was—

'The Signora ought to have left you her money.'

'She did leave me part, but her relatives and her padre confessare got it all, somehow, and gave me the choice of a convent or turning out. I left them.'

'Brave child, to face the world alone. You hated the convent, then?'

'I could die, but not live in captivity,' was the Provençale's answer. 'I took freedom.'

‘And its dangers,’ half murmured Cavagnac.

‘They are less than the other, Monsieur.’

‘C’est vrai, mon enfant.’

For some minutes both were silent, and then once more the stranger’s slender hand was laid lightly on the girl’s shoulder.

‘Anna-Marie, what made you start when I first spoke? Did I startle you, my child?’

‘No, Monsieur; it was your voice—something in its tone—that reminds me of the voice of—’

‘Who, caralina?’

‘Il gran’ Maestro.’

Was it fancy, or did the firm hand,

resting on her shoulder, tremble the hundredth part of an inch ?

‘You mean the sculptor, Stewart Claverhouse ?’

‘Si, Signor.’

‘Do you know him ?’

The sweet face brightened, the soft eyes smiled.

‘Yes, well. I sat to him. I was never a model to any sculptor but him.’

Mark the difference. She thought no explanation necessary to him. She had given one to Casper, but this man she felt, by her subtle woman’s instinct, would not misunderstand her.

‘Marie, is he not noble, beautiful ?’

‘Signor, he should be called “Il Angelo,”’ was the southern’s characteristic

answer. 'I call him so, but he only smiles.'

The stranger dropped his hand, and his lip quivered as he asked,

'Where is he now? when did you see him last?'

'Two months ago, Monsieur. He went to Paris, thence he meant to go to England.'

'To England? to London?'

'Oui, M. le Comte.'

'Have you ever been there?'

'Never, Monsieur, but I am on my way there. I want to see London.'

'It is very lonely there for the friendless, my child.'

'Qu'importe, Monsieur?' said the wanderer; 'all places are alike friendless to me.'

My dog Corsare is my only *camarade*. I shall be no more lonely in London than here.'

'Not while he or I are there,' muttered the stranger in English. Then aloud he said,

'And now I must go; but we shall meet again, Anna. See, give me that Florentine cameo.'

He took it from her little hand, and dropped two glittering English sovereigns into her box, adding, 'Where, then, is your *camarade*?'

'The Signor shall see him: Olà! Corsare! amico mio!'

There was a moment's pause, and then, leaping over the graves, bounding lightly to his mistress's feet, came one of those beautiful wolf-hounds used by the Ca-

labrian shepherds on the mountains. At the sight of the stranger the noble animal stopped and fixed on his face that look of intense, almost human observation which we so often see in dogs of the nobler breeds.

‘Eh, then, will you trust me, you magnificent Corsare?’ said Cavagnac, holding out his hand.

The moment he spoke the hound pricked up his ears; then, with a pleased whine, began licking his hand all over, evidently liking the stranger’s face, voice, and caresses.

‘He behaved,’ said Guy, ‘as if he knew my voice, yet he cannot possibly do so.’

‘Pardon, Monsieur; his memory of a

voice he loves is no less true than mine ;
his ear detects the same resemblance that
mine did.'

Again that slight start; the stranger
stooped over the dog as he said,

'Explain yourself, Anna.'

'Corsare was given me nearly three
years ago by the Maestro,' said the child,
quietly watching him ; and as he raised
himself erect again his dark eye caught
hers.

'You would fain read me, petite, if
you could ; well, I knew him years ago,
in his boyhood.'

'And loved him, Monsieur?'

'Child, could any one help it? have
you not rightly called him Il Angelo?
Listen, Anna ; if you are in London be-

fore I am, as you probably will be, will you deliver a message for me ?’]

‘I will do anything for Monsieur,’ said the wanderer gratefully.

He laid his hand on her shoulder, and said, in a low voice, which all his control could not make quite steady,


‘Then, Anna, if you see the Maestro anywhere, tell him that Guido lives.’

‘I will seek him out, Monsieur.’

‘God keep thee, my child.’

The child’s dark eyes filled with tears, and she stooped suddenly, kissed his hand, and with an almost whispered ‘Au revoir, Monsieur,’ walked quickly away, followed closely by the faithful dog.

But the stranger sank down on the little grave, and covered his eyes with the



right hand her pure lips had touched.
Never before, in all his wild, reckless,
changeable life, had such a kiss rested on
that beautiful hand.


CHAPTER II.

MAGNA CIVITAS, MAGNA SOLITUDO.

‘EASE her! Stop her!’

This monotonous chant was uttered drearily down the engine-room skylight of the river steamer. A grimy, handsome face looked up and nodded, and puffing and fussing, the ‘Leopard’ stopped at the Temple Stairs.

‘Now, then, ladies and gents, who’s for the Temple Stairs?’ was shouted hoarsely above the hum and buzz of steam, as the



plank was thrown across to the pier, followed by the usual rush and hurry. 'Every man for himself, and the devil take the hindmost.' Not quite, though. More than once on the way from London Bridge the handsome, hot, grimy face below had caught sight of a young, beautiful, foreign face looking down on him from above; and now, coming up the ladder for a second's fresh air, he saw the same delicate face and slight form standing apart and alone, save for a large dog which she held by a short chain. The man touched her kindly.

'We're at the Temple Stairs, bairn. Are ye no for landing here?'

Unable to speak many words of English, and but imperfectly understanding it,

his broad, strong Scottish accent made him utterly unintelligible to the young foreigner ; but she felt the kind tone, and with her sweet graceful smile shook her head, saying, 'No understand, monsieur.'

'Eh, not speak English ? Look, then, d'ye land there ?' And he pointed to the pier, at the same time gently urging her to step towards the plank.


The gestures were understood directly and answered, 'Non, monsieur, Waterloo Pier ; merci.'

'Know what you're about, bairn, eh ? Poor thing !'

The rough hand touched her gently, the rough face smiled kindly on her, and then he disappeared down the hatchway again. But as the boat puffed and steamed


and paddled fussily away, the man, glancing up, saw the shaggy head of the wolf-hound and the soft, girlish face of the stranger looking down, not at the engines, but at him.

On board there was the usual crowd that fill the up-river boat of a late spring evening. City clerks, going home after a hard day's work; excursionists; the institutional (to coin a word) young man and his young woman, the latter in the favourite pink muslin—tumbled now—the black silk cape and pink-stringed pink-beflowered bonnet; the herd of cockneys and milliners' girls, with the attendant counter-jumper; the tradesman, with his comfortable, ample wife and three or four shockingly healthy Harry the



Eighth children ; and such a child I abominate. It stares like a small porcine ; it treads on your dainty patent leather boots, and is budgeless until actually shoved. It is always stuffing with sweets. It is red-legged and red-cheeked ; and if by ill-luck you say a word to it, will not be got rid of at any price. Ugh !


There was, of course, the old woman who always looks like a monthly nurse, and commits a fraud upon society when she dares to travel by anything but an omnibus, to which she by right belongs. In a train or steamboat she has not the least right. She breathes hard and asthmatically. She can never find her ticket ; never get along fast enough ; never in any way 'look out' for herself, and there-



fore has no right, legally or morally, to go where every one has his own business to attend to.

Such was for the most part the crowd amongst which the Roman cameo seller stood solitary and friendless, though not unnoticed, for her foreign appearance had drawn upon her many a rude stare and insolent remark from several. One, even set on by Polly, had asked her, smirkingly, 'What she'd got to sell in that box?' The tone was unmistakeably insolent, but the girl merely said, with quiet distance, 'Je ne vous comprends pas,' and turned away.

With a laugh, Mr Counter-jumper laid his hand on the box to enforce his meaning, when a low fierce growl from the wolf-hound made him start back in alarm,



while Anna-Marie, with a contemptuous smile, caressed the faithful animal.

‘He’s a mind to take care of you, miss,’ said a man in a blue ‘monkey,’ and he pointed to the dog. ‘Won’t let that fellow insult you, eh?’

The Provençale could follow his meaning, and answered with a smile and a ‘Non, monsieur.’

‘Is he yours?’

‘Oui, mon chien, mon camarade.’

‘He is a deuced fine dog,’ remarked the man, stroking the hound, and Corsare acknowledged it, as a gentlemanly dog should, by licking his hand.

‘Eh, sir, you know I’m praising you, then.’

‘He likes you,’ said the girl, in her pretty delicate English.

‘Is he savage-tempered?’

‘Oh non; gentle—il est vrai qu’il n’aime pas ces gens là!’ and her contemptuous glance and shrug made her meaning clear enough to him.

‘Eh, good dog: he’s of no English breed?’

‘Plait-il, Monsieur?’ said Anna-Marie inquiringly.

‘He is not English?’ repeated the man, smiling.

‘Inglis? non; Italiano, Calabrian wolf-hound.’

‘He is valuable, you know; worth money,’ added the other, showing her a gold coin; ‘a rare dog here. I suppose

you will sell him ?’

The cameo seller opened her dark eyes wide.

‘Non, Monsieur : je ne le vendrai jamais—jamais.’

‘Have you ever been in England before—in London ?’


‘A Londres ? non, Monsieur.’

‘Your friends will meet you, of course ?’ said the man confidently. ‘Ought to, as it’s growing lateish.’

‘I have none,’ said Fleur-de-Marie.

‘None, — no friends ? good Lord !’ said the man ; ‘you’re a damned sight too pretty to be alone in a city !’

The Provençale looked half surprised, half puzzled, but her answer was sad enough.



‘J’y suis habitué, Monsieur.’

‘Now, then! Adelphi Pier. Who lands?’ came the hoarse cry, and the man, with a hasty ‘Good-evening, my dear,’ darted away, and vanished in the crowd on the pier.

The wanderer looked wistfully after him, and then shivered as her glance fell on the dark rolling river; then she glided to the skylight once more, and looked down. There he was, moving about between the machinery, but he glanced up and nodded, and when the boat stopped at Waterloo Pier he jumped on deck.

‘Here ye are, bairn, and God speed ye; the Lord will no forget ye, more won’t Archie Gregor.’

‘Merci, and I shall never forget *you*,—

never,' said the child, and so they parted.

Doubtless that man's little kindness, the few heartfelt words, the kind smiles, the sincere 'God speed ye,' went up for a memorial of him, and wiped out many a sin.

Turning with the stream, Anna de Laval soon found herself in a somewhat narrow, but bustling, crowded street—the Strand; but Corsare arrested her steps: the poor dog was hungry, and he stopped short at a baker's shop, looking up in his mistress's face with that speaking look of wistful entreaty that is so irresistible.


'Pover cane mio—'

She entered the shop, spent her two last pennies in buying two penny loaves, gave one to the dog, and eat the other her-

self. Then the two wanderers went forth once more, but it was dark now, and the sky was heavy with threatening black clouds.

What crowds of people swept ceaselessly past her; no foreign city was like it; every one seemed in a hurry and bustle,—carriages, carts, omnibuses, vehicles of all kinds rattling along in an endless deafening noise.

At first the cameo seller half-mechanically offered her pretty foreign wares to passers by, but her gentle 'Please buy, Monsieur,' drew from one man a rough 'Oh, go to hell, gal! the police ought to lock up such trash as you!' Another, dressed, at least, as a gentleman, and bustling along, told her—'Out of the way,



or I'll give you in charge.' While a third, who looked like a hanger-on at theatres, said with a sneer, 'You're devilish pretty, my dear, but you needn't make a cover of those toys; any one can see through a ladder.'

The wanderer turned away. Insult was not new to her, nor was the little episode which followed. A handsomely-dressed woman—a French-woman evidently—passed along, glanced at her, and then, as if on second thoughts, stopped and addressed her in very vulgar French.

'Mon enfant, you are too young and pretty to be out alone at this hour. Go home, ma chère.'

The silky, kind manner, the handsome dress did not for a moment deceive Anna

de Laval, and she answered with cold hauteur,

‘I am safe enough. I have no home or friends.’

‘Pauvre enfant, ignorant of the dangers which surround you. Come with me, and I will find you a lodging.’


The Provençale bowed low.

‘La pauvre enfant is so perfectly aware of the dangers, that she has the “honour” to wish madame a very good evening and a safe journey.’

‘A safe journey, ma chère ! Where?’

‘Au diable,’ answered the cameo seller coolly, as she turned on her heel.


‘Coquine ! diablesse ! maudite !—’ but Anna lost the choicest epithets of the elegant shower ; and perhaps there is no



individual who has at command a more varied and foul vocabulary of abuse than a low, disreputable French-woman.

The Provençale wandered on slowly, and found her way at last into broad Regent-street, now brilliantly lighted up, and near a shop window she paused and looked round, utterly forlorn and weary, sick at heart, *alone* in that great city. The crowd swept past her—business-seekers, pleasure-seekers, sin-seekers, but not one of all those thousands whose face or voice was familiar; no place where the weary head of the stranger could be laid at rest even for one short night.

‘ Corsare, mon ami, it is cold and cheerless here—not like our warm South,’ she whispered, talking to the hound as indeed




to a friend. 'We must sleep under some portico to-night, and to-morrow find the Maestro.'

Corsare licked her face and hand, understanding the loving voice and eyes, if not the words; and with her little hand resting on his shaggy head, the two went on again, not quite alone, not utterly friendless with that faithful companion and friend at her side. Yet even to him her right was challenged, for a policeman stopped her, demanding how she got that odd dog, too handsome for such as her to own.

'Il m'a accompagné de l'Italie,' she said, tightening her grasp on the steel chain, in itself of foreign make.

'Can't you speak English? bother!'



He glanced round, and addressed a flashily-dressed female, whom he evidently knew.

‘I say, here, Miss Bessie, do tell a fellow what this Frenchy’s lingo means, will yer?’

The woman stopped, with a hard laugh.

‘Well, what’s up?’

‘Why, this dog ain’t hers. Young ’un, tell this lady where you got it.’

The girl’s lip curled, but she repeated her answer.

‘She brought it from Italy, she says. ’Tain’t an English dog, either.’

‘Hem—no; but might be stole, for all that,’ said the man suspiciously, and laid his hand on the chain. Corsare growled

and showed his teeth, half-crouching, as if for a spring. The man stepped back hastily. The woman laughed, but said, with a touch of womanly feeling yet left in her,

‘Let the child go. The very dumb brute tells you plain enough that she’s his own mistress. Good-night.’

She sailed on, bobby turned on his heel, and the girl and the dog went their way .

‘Baffled, weary, and dishearten’d,’

till at last, late at night, worn out, they crept under the deep, gloomy portico of a handsome mansion, and soon slept the deep sleep of the weary, the dog lying close on her dress, the girl’s head resting on the dog’s curling thick hair, each nestling close to the other for warmth, a per-

fect picture, beautiful, indeed, and very sad; the very policeman was touched, and would not see them. But at midnight he was succeeded by a comrade less merciful, younger, more officious and bullying in the discharge of his duty, and his rough voice soon roused the wanderers.

‘Now, you young vagrant, get up! How dare you go a-sleepin’ on a gentleman’s door-steps?’

Anna-Marie rose slowly, answering, ‘It will not hurt him or you, *vaurien*.’

‘None o’ yer impidence, gal! You jist come along with me. I’ll teach ye that the law don’t let vagabones sleep in the streets. Come on.’

So the poor cameo seller was taken to the station-house, and locked up for the

crime of not having a sou to pay for a lodging. 'Eh bien, Corsare, it is better here than on the door-step,' she said as the cell door closed, and soon the two slept again.

'Well, young woman, and what have you to say to the charge?' asked Mr Turton, the magistrate, the next morning, after hearing Jack-in-office.

'Plait-il, Monsieur?'

'Cannot you speak English?'

'I can understand a little, Monsieur, but not speak but very little.'

So the magistrate questioned her in French.

'Have you been long in London?'

'Je suis arrivée hier.'

'Well, the English law does not allow

any one to sleep on door-steps or in the streets.'


'But, Monsieur, I had not a sou, not one bajocco, to get lodging.'

'I cannot help that; the law must be fulfilled. As you are so young and a stranger, I shall let you off this time, but you must not do it again.'

'Merci, Monsieur; and when I have no money what must I do?'

'Go to the workhouse or a refuge. Meanwhile I shall give you a shilling out of the poor-box.'


'Monsieur, I am not a beggar,' said Anna de Laval haughtily. 'I want neither your money nor your workhouse. Monsieur le préfet, bonjour.' And the Provençale left the court with her dog.



MANUSCRIPT X.

SOMETHING I HAD NEVER DARED TO WRITE.

BACK again in London, and welcomed back by all my acquaintance, as well as by my mother and Nina, who had themselves only just arrived from Naples. Years had not much altered Georgine—women of her type look old when they are young, and young when they are middle-aged; but Nina Lennox had changed indeed, and yet not changed: Nature had only more than fulfilled the promise of her



beautiful childhood, but it was the Nina of old,—now gay and laughing, now grave and thoughtful, as a saddened woman, always full of those thousand little sweet winning ways of hers; but it startled me, strangely and indefinitely, to see that the large deep blue eyes had not lost the expression which even as a boy had so struck me, a curious look, as if the shadow of future sorrow had fallen there; it reminded me—it always had reminded me—of Stewart's eyes, but in his it was something more unearthly, more deeply melancholy, more—shall I write it?—more doomed. What I had never dared to put in words was done for me the very first week of my return by a stranger, whose words came to my ears by chance in the

street. I had stopped at a large picture-shop in Regent-street to look at some photographs. There were two other gentlemen there; one, the younger, looked like a medical student; the elder might have been a physician, certainly a professional man.

‘Who the deuce is this dark man?’ said the former.

‘Not know *him*! Why, it is the great sculptor, Stewart Claverhouse—“il gran’ Maestro” they call him. I see by the *Times* that he is coming over here soon.’

‘What a very handsome face it is.’

‘It is far inferior to the original; it is a wonderful face, but it saddened me when I saw it.’

‘Saddened—why?’

I heard the answer distinctly as the two turned away slowly.

‘Because he is doomed. You may smile, but my miserable gift has never yet failed me. He will die young, and die violently; it is in his eyes.’

I turned sick and dizzy for a minute, as if I had received a blow.

‘I am a fool!’ I muttered, ‘to care for such chance words, spoken by a stranger, of a man I have not seen for twelve years, and whom I do not like.’

Vain sophistry! like him? no, there were times when I hated the thought of him; but, for all that, time and absence had failed to loosen the wonderful power of his fascination, some subtle charm, to

me wholly inexplicable, whose existence was not a fancy, but a fact.

I shuddered in a vague dread as I walked on again: something dark and horrible and ghastly seemed to have loomed up suddenly on my life. O God!—if there be a God — was it on me even then?

I had not gone many yards towards the Circus when I heard a mellow voice behind me say,

‘Surely an old pupil of mine?’ and a hand on my shoulder wheeled me round.
‘Yes, it is Casper Von Wolfgang.’

‘Dr John Fantony!’ I exclaimed in unfeigned pleasure and surprise.

Handsome, noble old man, not changed by time, save that his hair was silvery

white now : the stately figure was as erect as of yore ; the blue eye as clear and bright. His seventy years were beautiful indeed.

‘Yes, the old man himself,’ he said, as we walked on together. ‘I saw you some way down, and I thought I recognized the walk as like what yours was ten years ago. What are you doing? not in any profession?’

‘No, sir, none ; I had no taste for any of them, you know.’

‘I remember. Is Mrs Von Wolfgang well, and your little cousin?’

‘Thank you, quite well ; but Nina is a tall girl now—nearly nineteen,’ said I, smiling.

‘Dear me, yes ; you all get on so fast,

that one forgets; a sign of age, Casper.'

'You don't look older, sir, than when I was with you. I suppose, if it is not an impertinent question, that you have long since given up Allington Lodge?'

'Oh yes; this six or seven years ago. My boy would have it.'

'Your boy?' I repeated, for I knew that he was a bachelor.

'Your old companion, Stewart Claverhouse; and ever since my home has been either at Ernescliff Hall, or his house in London—a family mansion, you know, in — Square. I expect him every day from Paris, and I've got the house ready; even his studio is arranged, for his Italian servant arrived two days back with such of his works of art as were not already

with me. You have never seen him since he left school ?'

'No, sir, never ; but I hope to see him now.'

'Of course you know at least some of his works ?'

'Not to do so, Dr John, would be to argue myself unknown. I have seen some of the most famous of them, and among them that most perfect ideal, "A Poet's Dream."''

'Ah, that is indeed a gem ; it has not a fault, from the minutest chiselling of the broken column on the steps of which the dreamer sleeps, to the lightest fold of the child's drapery. And her face ! he must have idealized his model in the halo of his own thought.'

‘Partly, Dr John, but the model was little less beautiful than the sculpture. I came across her in Rome a fortnight ago. She is a cameo and image seller, about fifteen, and quite alone in the world.’

‘Poor young thing, poor child; it grieves me always to hear such things. So young and lovely! what *can* become of a girl like that?’

‘Certainly, sir, no good in general; but this one is no common model. You know his beautiful life-size statue of a girl leaning on a cross?’

‘Of course; the Earl of D— has it. You mean the famous “Fiora di Maria?”’

‘Ay; this Provençale sat for that,’ said I.

‘I should like to see her,’ said Dr

John. 'I should very much like to see her.'

'Well, sir, she is very likely to wander to London. You might see her.'

'I hope I shall. Ah, here is —— street, and I have a call to make there; so good-bye for the present, Wolfgang. I am really very glad to have met you, and so, I am sure, will my grandnephew be to see you again.'

I remembered the somewhat Jesuitical answer of Stewart years ago, and doubted this, but his last word made me ask,

'Pardon me, Doctor; how is he your *grand-nephew* ?'

'Why, I had a sister many years older than myself, who was married to a Colonel Egmont, and they left one daughter, Cora.

She was barely eighteen when she married Graham Claverhouse, of Ernescliff Hall. Stewart is her son.'

'An only child, then?'

'Ay, yes, an only child. Once more good-bye.'

'Good-bye, Doctor.'

We shook hands and parted company ; but, strangely enough, all the way home the name of Stewart's dead mother was in my head. Cora ! what a sweet name. Was he like her ? was it from her he took his beauty ? and I tried to picture her ; but always instead of the dark doomed face which alone could be like the great sculptor, there rose before me, in all its golden beauty, the face of Nina Lennox.

CHAPTER III.

IL ANGELO.


‘WILL Monsieur tell me, is that the Dover train coming in?’

The inspector addressed turned quickly at the sound of the soft voice and very foreign English, to see a young foreigner in a picturesque dress, with a pretty mahogany box slung at her side, and holding a large dog in a chain.

‘Yes, it’s the Dover train,’ he answered, and passed on.

Anna-Marie drew back a little, and waited patiently till the train came in, and discharged its living cargo, and then her eyes sought eagerly amongst the crowd for one form and face; but for all her watching, the wolf-hound saw him first, and gave a sudden pull, that almost overthrew his mistress's balance.

'Eh bien, mon chien, va chercher ton maître,' she said, giving the leash out a little; but the dog, in his excitement, sprang forwards, dragged the chain from her hand, and alarmed several people by dashing amongst them, and springing in frantic joy on a tall, dark man who was walking along the platform at an easy lounge, amusingly at variance with the bustle around him.



‘Corsare! mon brave, d’où viens-tu!’
he said in pleased surprise, caressing the Calabrian, and lifting the chain, just as Anna de Laval, following, quickly came up.

‘Monsieur! que je suis heureuse de vous revoir!’

‘Eh moi, mon enfant, ma chère Anna, I little thought your sweet face would be the first to welcome me to England.’

And as he put the chain back into her hand, he held it for a minute in his own, and drew her aside.

‘And so, caralina, you have wandered to this great busy capital, and *here* too. How did you stray here, my child?’

The girl looked up in the beautiful face, and smiled.

‘I have been here two days, waiting for the Signor.’


‘For me? first, how could you know when to expect me?’

‘I went into a grande boutique, where I saw a picture, a photograph of the Signor, and asked if they knew when you would come. They answered, “the papers had said in a day or two;” so I came here.’

‘Strange child. Why?’

‘Monsieur, London is so wide, that perhaps I might have lost you in it, and I had promised to give you a message.’

‘A message, Anna?—from whom?’



‘A stranger, who met me near Heidelberg, and bade me, if I saw the Signor Maestro first, tell him—shall I say it here?’

‘Yes, we are speaking Italian,—tell me what—’

‘His words were, “Anna, if you see the Maestro anywhere, tell him that Guido lives.”’

The sculptor looked at the child like a man in a dream, and then shook his head with a sorrowful smile.

‘Some one would mock me, Anna. The Guido I loved was murdered; if not, I should have seen him years ago.’

‘Signor, no,—listen. The man who gave me the message was dark and hand-

some. His hand was like that of the Maestro, his voice had tones in it like the one I knew so well; is that Il Angelo's Guido ?'

'Hush, Anna, my child !'

He walked forward a little way, and presently came back to her.

'Anna, you have indeed given me a golden word. The man you saw was Guido my friend ; is he in London ?'

'Je ne sais pas, Monsieur ; he said he was coming, but I only arrived a week ago, and I have not seen him.'

'Cara mia, did he tell you his own name ?'

'Non, Monsieur, only the name he calls himself,—M. le Comte de Cava-gnac.'

‘Eh bien ! And now, Anna-Marie, where can I find you, if need be ? ’

‘I lodge, Monsieur, at ——— Court, Edgeware Road.’

‘I shall remember ; meanwhile I want a present for my uncle’s old house-keeper.’

And he lifted the lid of her box, showing a tray of exquisite cameos, real ones, for he himself had stocked her box as a parting gift.

‘The Signor will deign to choose the best.’

The Signor chose a large shawl brooch, and smiling, asked the price.

‘It has none for Il Angelo.’

But the sculptor only shook his head, and laid three sovereigns in its place, with

a look which she knew of old there was no gainsaying.

‘Adio, fanciulla mia.’

‘A rivederlà, Signor il Angelo.’

And each went their way.

MANUSCRIPT XI.

L'INCONNU.

THE second day after my meeting with Dr Fantony, I went down to Dover to see my half-brother Walter, who was stopping there with his family before coming to town for the approaching season.

The journey down was stupid enough, unmarked by either pleasant conversation or incident: the only person I exchanged a word with called in requisition my stock of German, which was pretty good. Some

little way from the station I was addressed in very pure German by a man muffled up in a large coat and cap ; but, to judge by his stooping gait and gruff voice, he was not young.

Could I tell him of any good hotel ? He was a stranger, he said, and hoped I would excuse him.

I told him he was welcome, and told him I was myself going to a very good one to see a friend, and I should be very happy to show him the way. He thanked me and accepted my offer, and proved an agreeable companion. We parted in the hall of ——'s hotel. very good friends, and I made my way up to the apartments occupied by the Falconbridges. I would not be announced, but entered by a bou-

doir, and stood just within the half-open drawing-room door looking at the group within, unnoticed myself.

It was a picture.

A large fire blazed cheerily and brightly in the low grate, so brightly that it threw light and shade, though the daylight was not yet on the wane.

By a small table, bending over her drawing, sat Lady Falconbridge, Theodora, a woman a little over thirty, and one of the most lovely English matrons that I ever saw, — lovely in I know not what nameless charms, for personally few could have judged her more than very pretty, but Nina called her a sweet, pure woman, and in that, I think, touched the very key-note that


tuned the loving harmony of her nature.

On the rug sat the two eldest children, of eight and ten years old, a girl and boy, listening intently to their father, who was reading aloud to them Maria Hack's 'Winter Evenings;' and, though his brother says it, even this land of handsome men and women cannot show many a handsomer English gentleman than Walter Falconbridge. The group was completed and made perfect by a lovely child of four years who nestled in his arms, the better to peep at the pictures. I stood for some ten minutes looking, and then said quietly,

'What a very pretty picture you would make.'

There was a general start.

'Casper himself, by all good luck!'



exclaimed Walter, and my hand was nearly wrung off, while his wife and the children gave me an equally warm reception, little Flora transferring herself to my knees.

‘And when did you arrive, old fellow? and how long can you give us here?’ asked Walter.

‘Have you dined, or lunched, or eaten in some way, Casper?’ asked Theodora.

‘Eaten? Yes, plenty, thank you. Nina tells me that you have been ruralizing here.’

‘Indeed we have; but we are coming up in a week or so.’

‘Alec, I suppose you like Dover better than London?’

‘I should think so, uncle. It’s so jolly here, isn’t it, Amy?’

‘ Oh, stunning,’ returned the little lady, with a wicked glance at mamma.

‘ “Stunning,” indeed. Pussy, is that language for the Honourable Amy Falconbridge ?’ laughed I.

‘ Bother the honourables,’ returned missy, jauntily. ‘ I like best to—what is it, papa ?’

‘ Ask your uncle.’

‘ Follow your own sweet will. Eh, Miss Amy ?’

Little Flora, commonly called Dottie, here interposed.

‘ Uncle Cas, what do you think ? somebody came here yesterday who knew you.’

‘ Did he ? Who was he, Dot ?’

‘ I didn’t say it was a *he*. Guess who.’

‘ Was it a *she* ?’

'No,' said she, making a mouth, which I kissed, 'it wasn't a she.'

'Oh, a he, then, after all. Was he English?'

'I don't know. Was he, Alec? He didn't look English, nor speak quite like —not like you or papa.'

I was really puzzled, but made a guess. 'Papa's old French friend, M. Gustave Distau?'

'No; he's old and plain, *very* plain; but this person was young, and oh, so beautiful!'

'It couldn't be — no, the description won't do, and papa don't know him — my old school-fellow, Gus Seymour?'

'No; but you're burning, uncle. He

said he had been at school with you.
Guess again.'

I started, and looked at my brother.
'She can't mean—you don't know him,
Walter?'

'Well, who?'

'I had but one school-fellow who
would strike the child as "so beautiful,"
and that is the sculptor, Stewart Claver-
house.'

'Precisely, Mr Casper. He landed
yesterday, early; spent two hours here,
and went on to London.'

'Where did *you* meet him?' said I in
surprise.

'Dora and I met him last autumn
twelvemonth in Vienna. He has taken
the children's hearts by storm. They

would make me take them with him up to the train. And Miss Dottie, here, nothing would do but he must carry her every step.'

'And tired him, I am afraid,' said Theodora. 'I am sure he isn't very strong.'

'He is, or was, very muscular,' said I, 'and he was never ill as a boy. He had a large fund of concealed strength.'

'Perhaps. But,' added Lady Falconbridge in French, as she rose to ring for lights, 'he is not a long-lived man.'

Again that blow ; that ghastly feeling of something dread and unseen to come. I was glad of the lights, and anything that turned the subject to other things.

I remained with them two days, during

which, by the way, I encountered my German acquaintance twice, coming in, in his odd big cap and coat. The third morning I took leave of the Falconbridges and walked up to the station, reaching in time to pick a carriage in which was only an elderly gentleman and a very young man.


The second bell had rung when the door was opened in a most leisurely manner, and in came a tall, slight, dark man, wearing a somewhat Spanish-shaped felt hat, and with a heavy cloak cast across him in carelessly graceful folds. He was certainly a foreigner, but, save for a glance, he seemed to notice nothing, but sat by the window so shadowed and concealed by his hat and cloak, that I could

not see much of either his face or form, yet I felt a great desire to see his face and hear him speak. An opportunity offered before we had gone many miles, when, looking at my watch, I found that it had stopped. I addressed the stranger in French, though he certainly was not a Frenchman. 'Monsieur, my watch has stopped; will you oblige me by telling me the time?'

He bowed gravely, and held out in his gloved left hand a beautiful chronometer watch. I glanced at it, set my watch, and as I replaced it said in English,

'Many thanks, Monsieur; I suppose this is your first visit to England?'

'No, I have been here before; I have been in most countries.'



I started. Was I mistaken? could my ear deceive me? surely no; like

‘A song from out the distance’

came that low, soft voice and peculiar, delicate accent, altered in that it was yet more mellowed and tranquil, but still the same. If I could only hear it more, and only see his hand, I should be positive. If *it was* that man he did not know me, evidently. How should he? twelve years had changed me from youth to mature manhood.

I answered his remark.

‘That is more than I can say. My experience, though pretty good, is not quite so wide.’

‘It would be difficult to be so, M. l’Anglais, since I have at least eight or ten years

more than you, and was wandering while you were in the nursery. Have you just come from the continent ?'

'Yes,' said I carelessly, to conceal my chagrin; 'from Rome this time, and, by Jove! I encountered, only the day before I left, the loveliest and most patrician looking cameo seller that one could wish to see!'

'Eh, Monsieur,' said the stranger with a half-laugh; 'and you found her, I suppose, more beautiful than la Sainte Vierge herself?'

That laugh, half-mocking, half—I know not what, but it stung me as that same laugh—it *was* the same, surely—had stung me years ago.

'Oh, as to that,' I answered, with my

most *blasé* air, 'she was deuced pretty; but one can't fall in love with a child of fourteen or fifteen, you know.'

'Ah, no, not at your age, perhaps,' he said quietly; 'one must have seen more of life,—hard, uphill, real *life*, and—shall I say, be more seared, to thoroughly appreciate the charm and freshness of a child of that age.'

Though chafing inwardly, and angry at the power he had to chafe me, I replied,

'This girl had lost the very freshness you admire: it was destroyed.'

'Are you sure that you can judge any one in a single interview?'

Before I could answer the old gentleman interposed—

'It is not very likely, sir, that a Ro-

would make me take them with him up to the train. And Miss Dottie, here, nothing would do but he must carry her every step.'

'And tired him, I am afraid,' said Theodora. 'I am sure he isn't very strong.'

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'Ah, no, not at your age, perhaps,' he said quietly; 'one must have seen more of life,—hard, uphill, real *life*, and—shall I say, be more seared, to thoroughly appreciate the charm and freshness of a child of that age.'

Though chafing inwardly, and angry at the power he had to chafe me, I replied,

'This girl had lost the very freshness you admire: it was destroyed.'

'Are you sure that you can judge any one in a single interview?'

Before I could answer the old gentleman interposed—

'It is not very likely, sir, that a Ro-

man cameo seller would have much freshness of any sort left.'

'Nor had this one, sir,' said I. 'She had lost that freshness *from* the world which this gentleman as a man of the world considers so fascinating. She had suffered and toiled—does still, I suppose.'

'I don't think,' remarked the old gentleman, 'that at that age children can suffer as much as a few years later; it isn't in them,—within their capabilities.'

The stranger glanced at him, and I saw his delicate lipcurl slightly, and I wondered if by any chance he had ever known Anna de Laval, and was possibly thinking of her as he answered,

'Some girls there are, Monsieur,—a few I grant—who at fourteen, ay, and younger,


can and do suffer as keenly and deeply as ever they will in their lives.'

'Then, sir, they are not children: they have lost childhood.'

'Mille pardons, only in so far as suffering is so unnatural and foreign to extreme youth, that freedom from it is the great charm and feature of childhood.'

'Sir, would you call the city Arab of London, the *gamin* of Paris, children?—yet, Heaven knows, they suffer! where is their childhood?'

'The most of them, Monsieur, never had any to lose. They are born of and in vice, bred to it; theirs is the brutalizing suffering of hardship and vice. They are born old, they are vicious men and women almost as soon as they can walk and talk;



they learn to curse and blaspheme as creatures born children learn their mother's name, or the first simple prayer from her lips. Monsieur, you must shift your ground.' "

'Well, as you will. Did you ever see a child long remember its troubles or injuries? If it does, the first thing one remarks is, "How very *unchildlike*." '

'What range of age are you including?'

'Your own,—up to fourteen.'

'Then, Monsieur, indeed you are quite mistaken, if you will pardon me for saying so, and have surely seen very little of children. Were you an only child with kind parents?'

'Yes,—a mother, the best and kindest

a man could have,' returned the old man.

For one second the stranger paused, I thought, as if touched and pained by an answer that perhaps stirred a hundred sad and bitter memories. Then he said,

'Then you never felt, and, from your argument, never saw a child suffer; above all, suffer injustice which morally murders it. Injustice is what a child never forgets, and very rarely forgives, and it teaches it, as nothing else will teach it, what youth should never know—to hate fiercely.'

'You are right. And another thing, sir, about children, is their very true instinct of physiognomy,—nothing can deceive it.'

'C'est vrai, Monsieur. I rarely trust a man whom children and dogs dislike.'

‘Nor I. Women, too, have that fine instinct more than men.’

‘They have; but,’ he added, half-laughing, ‘it is a womanish quality which I possess to an extent that often astonishes myself. I have come across so many people in my life to whom I have taken that invincible suspicious dislike, and I have never yet found myself at fault. It is a curious faculty, impossible to define or reason upon.’

As he spoke, the train, which had been slackening speed, stopped at a station, and the old gentleman and his young friend got out, leaving me and the Italian—for such I judged him—alone in the carriage.

I was looking out of the window as

the train again moved on, but as I was drawing in my head the sunlight struck on something opposite me, and threw a dazzling ray in my eyes, completely blinding me for a second—only a second, and then I saw that the foreigner's felt hat lay beside him, that his heavy mantle was thrown off his shoulder, and that his right hand, ungloved, rested on the door, while the gleaming gem in the signet-ring on his third finger at once showed me what had dazzled my vision.

That beautiful, slender hand,—could I mistake it? no, my memory had not, did not fail me. I had said I should know his voice and hand again at any distance of time, and I had; ay, and recognized him, too, although he had dared me to do.

so: it was the strange rider. What a handsome man he was! too marked, too *distingué*, to be passed by or forgotten when once seen; but his had been no easy or happy life, I felt sure; a wild youth, a reckless, anxious, ever-restless manhood had left their traces; his six or seven-and-thirty years had been no child's play.

‘He certainly doesn’t recognize me,’ thought I triumphantly, but aloud I remarked cursorily—

‘Our fellow-travellers have very soon deserted us.’

‘Qu’importe? two are good company;’ and I felt that the large, brilliant dark eyes were fixed on me. ‘We probably shall not part so soon, as I presume

that M. Casper Von Wolfgang is returning to London.'

I started, I felt thoroughly 'sold,' aghast.

'What! you do know me, then?'

'Of course,' said he coolly; 'I told you I should, and I have proved my words no boast; yours were—'

'Excuse me,' said I, hotly—for I was thoroughly vexed—'we are quits. Your face I see for the first time, but I asserted that I should know your voice and hand again—'

'And you did not—'

'Pardon me if I contradict you, but I did; to-day the moment you spoke I recognized your voice and accent, and your hand, too, as soon as you dropped your mantle.'

more than you, and was wandering while you were in the nursery. Have you just come from the continent ?'

'Yes,' said I carelessly, to conceal my chagrin; 'from Rome this time, and, by Jove! I encountered, only the day before I left, the loveliest and most patrician looking cameo seller that one could wish to see!'

'Eh, Monsieur,' said the stranger with a half-laugh; 'and you found her, I suppose, more beautiful than la Sainte Vierge herself?'

That laugh, half-mocking, half—I know not what, but it stung me as that same laugh—it *was* the same, surely—had stung me years ago.

'Oh, as to that,' I answered, with my

most *blasé* air, 'she was deuced pretty; but one can't fall in love with a child of fourteen or fifteen, you know.'

'Ah, no, not at your age, perhaps,' he said quietly; 'one must have seen more of life,—hard, uphill, real *life*, and—shall I say, be more seared, to thoroughly appreciate the charm and freshness of a child of that age.'

Though chafing inwardly, and angry at the power he had to chafe me, I replied,

'This girl had lost the very freshness you admire: it was destroyed.'

'Are you sure that you can judge any one in a single interview?'

Before I could answer the old gentleman interposed—

'It is not very likely, sir, that a Ro-

‘Madonna mia ! that is nothing.’

‘N’est-ce pas ?’ said I. ‘May I ask you a question or two ?’

He bowed, with a quiet smile that I am sure I read aright. ‘Yes, but I will answer only as suits me.’

‘Well, then, twelve years ago you used to me this expression, when I said I should know you again, “Not you, it is not your trade,” implying that it was yours.’

‘What does Monsieur take me for ?’

‘I don’t know,’ said I frankly, and with an irresistible laugh at the odd turn of the conversation. ‘You puzzled me then as now, but I perfectly remember my boyish judgment of you.’

‘And what was that, if I may ask ?’

I hesitated, coloured, and laughed.

‘I am afraid it was not entirely complimentary, but, as I said, you puzzled me, you seemed to me under disguise, and yet you were unmistakably a man of birth—a gentleman.’

A shade came over his handsome face, strangely regretful and sorrowful, as he said,

‘A boyish judgment. You thought, then, that a gentleman could never be under disguise ; yet your guess, M. Casper, was not so very far wrong, for, as you English say, Necessity has no law ; but I have been or done no worse than most men. I am gentleman still.’

It needed no word to prove it. Patri-
cian was indelibly stamped in every
feature and movement.

There was a long silence, which I broke.

‘I remember that when I saw you, twelve years ago, I could not at all be sure to what country you belonged.’

I fancied that he shivered slightly, but he asked quietly,

‘Have you decided the question now, Monsieur?’

‘Why, yes. I fancy I can tell a man’s nationality well enough; it is a thing that very few can conceal.’

‘Vous avez raison; what, then, am I? French, German—’

‘No,’ said I, laughing at his allusion; ‘you are an Italian.’

‘Sì, Signor Tedesco.’

He answered gravely, and, leaning

back, sat for a long time silent. So did I, until I remembered that he had an advantage, which I saw no reason to allow him, if I could help it.

‘Signor,’ said I, ‘you have an advantage over me, and an exchange is no robbery. Might I ask the favour—’

My voice roused him from a deep reverie, for he looked up quickly.

‘Of my name, M. Von Wolfgang?’

‘S’il vous plait, M. l’Inconnu.’

He laughed softly, and said, wrapping his mantle about him,

‘At least, if Monsieur wishes it, I can give him the name under which he will meet me, very possibly, at the house or in the company of a mutual acquaintance.’

‘Pest on him! Stumped again!’

thought I, but I only bowed, and said,

‘What’s in a name? A rose by any other name would smell as sweet.’

‘And Romeo by any other name would still be Romeo, n’est-ce pas? Eh bien, call me Count de Cavagnac.’

‘Comme vous voulez, Monsieur. Ah, here we are at another station.’

Again the train stopped, other passengers came in, and for the rest of the journey the conversation was general. I parted with my strange companion at the cab-stand outside the terminus with a shake of the hand, an ‘Adieu, Monsieur,’ from me, and from him a quiet ‘A rivederlà.’

MANUSCRIPT XII.

OTHER DAYS COME BACK TO ME WITH
RECOLLECTED MUSIC.

ONCE more, after twelve years, I was in the same country and city as Stewart Claverhouse, and likely to encounter him at any hour.

Can you understand or analyze the contradiction and conflict of my feelings towards this man? Can you understand how I at once longed and dreaded to meet him, longed with an intense longing,

dreaded with an intense dread—of what? I knew not, save that years ago something dark and horrible had coiled itself serpent-like round my heart, and grown with my growth, lived with and in my life, till it seemed to have gigantic shape like a curse, yet I had never longed so much to see him, to touch his hand, to hear again the sound of his voice, to know—ah, to know at last what it was that ever had been between us. I must go to him soon if he did not come to me.

One day I was sitting in the library alone, reading, for the twentieth time, Macaulay's 'Battle of Lake Regillus.' My back was towards the door, and I was so absorbed in the poem that I scarcely heard, and certainly did not notice, the

door open, and a servant's voice saying something. I answered 'Yes' absently, and went on reading; but the next minute I felt the same curious sensation of *his* presence that I had felt so often in our boyhood. It made me lay down the book, though with an impatient 'Peste—I *won't* turn round!' but the impulse was too irresistible, and I rose hastily and turned round to see a tall, dark, grave man standing there as motionless as a statue, more perfect far in his grand beauty than any statue that was ever chiselled. I stood gazing on him for a moment like one spell-bound, and in that second's stillness a feather might have fluttered to the floor and been heard.

'Do you not know me, Casper?'

‘Not know Stewart Claverhouse?’

Our hands met, and I drew him forward to my own reading-chair.

‘Of all those I have ever known, Stewart, you are the man I have most wished, most longed to see again.’

He looked surprised, but only said,

‘I am very glad, for I feared I might be intruding; nor should I have called now, but that the Doctor told me you had expressed a wish to see me.’

Deeper, more full and rich, but the very soft musical voice as of yore, the same gentle, winning manner, the same inexpressible grace and charm which had fascinated me long ago,—matured, changed in much, but for all it was the same grave melancholy face and eyes that had haunt-

ed me from the first moment I saw him ; the same Stewart, save for the difference of years that had changed the youth into the bearded man. He looked older, too, than he was, by nearly three years.

‘ You cannot intrude,’ I said. ‘ In truth, I should have gone to you before now, only I went down to my brother at Dover ; and, besides, great men like il gran’ Maestro are not so accessible as us every-day mortals.’

‘ You rank yourself amongst them, then ?’

‘ Why not ?’ answered I, lightly. ‘ Never fear, mon camarade, I’ll be famous enough some day, yet.’

‘ An equivocal speech, Signor mio. But now, Wolfgang, can you tell me

anything of some of our old schoolfellows ?'

'Well, which of them ? I have been a good deal out of England myself.'

'I used to like some three or four of them very well,' said Claverhouse. 'What has become of Gus Seymour and Tom Dacre ?'

'Both are in London. The former married this three years.'

'What are they doing ? Gus used to talk of the bar.'

'He stuck to it, and is getting on rapidly.'

'C'est à dire—rapidly for the bar,' interposed the sculptor, smiling.

'No, not exactly ; he is really very clever, extremely clever, and has a very pretty little fortune of his own, let alone

what he calls a "tail," otherwise friends at court, viz. two large firms of attorneys, who are interested in his family, one way or another, and they have taken him by the hand. Besides, about a year ago he rather distinguished himself in a criminal trial—great forgery case. Oh, Gus is a lucky dog!’

‘I am glad of it. He was a fine generous-hearted fellow, and deserves success. I shall find him out. Now tell me of wild, witty Tom Dacre. Which was right in their prophecy of him—you or I?’

‘I don’t remember to what you allude, Bonnet-rouge,’ said I.

‘*That* old name. Why, you used to say that he was one of those clever, witty, monied fellows who would never do any-

thing. I never thought so. I always said he would make an object—work; his mind was too active to idle through life, monied though he was.’

‘Well, by Jove! you were right,’ exclaimed I, laughing. ‘He sowed his wild oats, like the rest of us. Why do you smile, Stewart? just that odd smile of yours that used to puzzle me.’

‘Never mind, Casper, go on; what did Tom do then?’

‘Well, by Jove! he pulled up and buckled to in good earnest, and threw himself into politics, active and busy as the best of them. He can write and speak well, too, in his clever, pithy, witty way. Falconbridge swears by him. Tom often speaks of you.’

‘I shall see him. Do you know what has become of that great bullying fellow?’

‘That you once thrashed?’

‘Ay, the same.’

‘Oh, he’s gone to the dogs entirely. Kept a racing stud, got cheated, took to betting, married a girl who bolted with his groom; then he took to drinking, was sold up, and sank out of our sphere entirely. Tom did tell me that he had heard that he got kicked to death by a horse, but it mayn’t have been him; vicious chap—never forgot that thrashing.’

‘Let him pass, and tell me of yourself,’ said Claverhouse. ‘Finding you still living with your mother, I infer that you are still unmarried.’

‘Yes, still free, my own master,’ I said;

‘and so are you, or we should have heard of it. No fair Italian has, I suppose, been able to captivate you? What armour of proof are you cased in, Stewart?’

‘I may retort the question.’

‘Oh, I—I really don’t know. I’ve been in love a dozen times, at least, but never yet met the right lady, I suppose,’ said I, giving the fire a poke. ‘Have you come at last to make your head-quarters in your native city with your uncle?’

‘Not my head-quarters.’

‘But you have fitted up a studio in your house?’

‘Yes, because I shall remain here all the summer and autumn, and then, like the swallows, fly to the south to winter.’

‘I say, Claverhouse, it strikes me that

Dr John enjoys your fine old hall and handsome town house more than you do— everything but yourself.’

‘Perdona, since I made him give up his school I have been much with the old man, or rather, he with me, for he came to me abroad. He was with me in America, too.’

‘He is fond of travelling, then, even now?’

‘He was till the last two years, but since then he prefers quiet.’

‘Whereas you are as restless as ever,’ laughed I. ‘I wonder you will give us your company for so long as six months.’

He laughed too, and answered—

‘I have work in hand that will keep me.’

‘I say, Stewart,’ said I suddenly, ‘wherever did you pick up that lovely model of yours—the Fiora di Maria, that Provençale?’

Claverhouse gave me one of his quiet searching looks. ‘I picked her up in Rome.’

‘Just where I saw her,—at the Colosseum. I had a long talk with her, quite a yarn, indeed; and you—the child thinks there is no one like the Signor Maestro; she would canonize you, I think.’

‘No, I think she has too good an opinion of me.’

‘Ha, ha! deeper villain better saint,’ said I. ‘Well, I don’t think there is much of the saint, then, about you. Now, come up-stairs with me, and let me introduce you

to my mother and cousin. I suppose you don't remember Nina, as you only saw her once, and that when she was seven years old.'

'I remember her.'

Long afterwards, cursing the hour I ever crossed his path, I remembered that quiet answer. Even then I glanced back at him, but his was a proud and very reserved face, and I could not read it.

When I opened the drawing-room door my mother was leaning back in an immense easy chair, reading, I think, the last new novel; while, half-sitting, half-reclining on the rug, was Nina, one little hand caressing or teasing Colin, the beautiful water-spaniel I had given her as a child, the other arm thrown round the brown head of my old favourite pointer Don.

‘Mother, I have brought an old friend,’ I began, and Nina sprang up hastily, while Georgine rose, and the dogs came fawning round Stewart. ‘My schoolfellow, Stewart Claverhouse; my mother, my cousin Nina Lennox.’

‘Let me welcome Mr Claverhouse as an old acquaintance by public and private hearsay,’ said Georgine, offering her hand; ‘my son has spoken of you so often, that you seem no stranger.’

‘And to me, in truth, you are none,’ said Nina, holding out her hand in her frank innocent way. ‘I may claim an old acquaintance, unless you have forgotten that ride with Cas and me.’

‘No, Miss Lennox, I have not; it was a most pleasant ride.’

‘Have you still got that magnificent black mare?’ said I.

‘Ayexa? she is alive, but superannuated now at Ernescliffe. I have an Ayexa the second, and she is the mother over again, as great a beauty in every way.’ And as he spoke he stooped to caress the dogs. ‘Are these yours, Miss Lennox?’

‘Only the spaniel. Cas gave him to me years ago. Don is Casper’s.’

‘You seem fond of dogs, Mr Claverhouse,’ said my mother. ‘May I ask when you did this?’ And she took from a small table an exquisite statuette of a Newfoundland dog, for which she had recently given a large price.

‘I did that, madam, two years ago, and the original is probably at present lying

in my studio.' He said this as he rose to go, and my mother gave me an imploring look. I knew hers and Nina's long-standing wish, and I said laughingly—

'Stewart, my mother has long had a great wish to visit your studio, if visitors are ever admitted.'

'Madame and her friends will be welcome whenever they choose to do me the honour,' he answered in his courteous, graceful manner, and took leave. I went down with him to the hall.

'Signor Scultore, I hope I have not trespassed too far in my request?'

'No, certainly not, Casper; I am glad you spoke.'

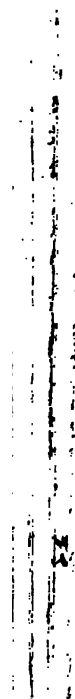
'What day and hour will best suit you?'

'Any day and any hour between two

and four. If I am out, my Italian servant Luigi will attend you.'

'I hope you will be at home yourself. Till then good-bye.'

I went back to the library and sat down. It was over. I had seen him again. Pleased I was, very pleased, but above all there was a sense of relief that showed me for the first time the phantom that in part had made me so dread him. What was it that had lifted the weight? He had forgotten his promise given to Nina twelve years ago,—*tant mieux*; it was given only for a trifle, only to a child. How should the bearded man remember the boy's promise? He had forgotten it.



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